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**FIFTY YEARS OF FLEET STREET**







*Sir John R. Robinson.*

# 10 Years of Fleet Street

1904

THE LONDON FLEET STREET

THE LONDON FLEET STREET

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THE LONDON FLEET STREET

LONDON

MACMILLAN AND CO.,

NEW YORK AND BOMBAY

1904



*Sir John R. Robinson.*



# Fifty Years of Fleet Street

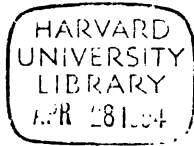
BEING  
THE LIFE AND RECOLLECTIONS  
OF  
SIR JOHN R. ROBINSON

COMPILED AND EDITED  
BY  
FREDERICK MOY THOMAS

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
NEW YORK : THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1904

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## INTRODUCTION

AT the death of Sir John Robinson, it was announced in several quarters that he had left behind him a volume of Memoirs intended for publication. It is unfortunate that this should not be the case, for all who knew him can imagine how delightful would have been such a work from his pen. He did, however, leave some diaries, more or less fragmentary, and a number of thick, closely written volumes of jottings in his own handwriting descriptive of events of which he had been an eye-witness and people he had seen and known.

From these materials, together with a mass of correspondence with more or less distinguished people of all descriptions, and, I may add, my own recollections extending over nearly a quarter of a century during which I was closely associated with Sir John, the present volume has been compiled. I have not thought it necessary or desirable to indicate in all cases what is his and what is my own. If there is anything amusing or

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entertaining in these pages, I am quite content that my dear old chief should have the credit of it. The dulness I take upon myself.

I am much indebted to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for leave to publish his striking letter to Sir John Robinson on the subject of America and the Americans ; to Mrs. James Payn, widow of the distinguished novelist and essayist, for permission to add some letters containing characteristic specimens of her lamented husband's genial, sunny humour, and to a number of Sir John's relatives and friends for similar facilities or for valuable counsel or assistance.

FREDK. MOY THOMAS.

*September 1904.*

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## CHAPTER I

Birth and parentage—A small Essex town in the 'thirties—Training  
—The Congregational School—The schoolmaster and the prize  
ring—Early experience of editorial duties.

JOHN RICHARD ROBINSON, one of the most distinguished journalists of Queen Victoria's reign, was born at Witham, a little town in Essex, some distance beyond Colchester on the main road from London to Ipswich and Norwich. His father, the Rev. Richard Robinson, a Congregational minister, who achieved a considerable reputation as a preacher both in the Eastern Counties and in Lancashire, had, as poorly paid pastors are very apt to have, a large family. Of the ten children born to him, however, three died in infancy. There remained three sons and four daughters, who were christened respectively Sarah Dennant, Louisa, Joseph Fletcher, John Richard, Frederick, Ellen, and Hephzibah, and who were born in the order in which their names are here given.

The second son, the subject of this Memoir, came into the world on November 2, 1828. On the side of both his father and mother he came of a Puritan stock. His paternal grandfather was the Rev. Thomas Robinson of Hallfold Chapel, Whitworth, near Rochdale, where he died in 1819,

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aged fifty-six years, and where a tablet commemorates his virtues ; and his mother's father was the Rev. John Dennant, for forty-six years an Independent preacher at Halesworth in Suffolk. John Dennant's daughter Sarah appears to have been a bright, clever, attractive girl, and her marriage with Richard Robinson was a love-match. The young couple started housekeeping in a very modest way at Cratfield, a little village not far from Halesworth, where they had become engaged and got married, and it was at Cratfield that their two eldest children were born. The marriage had taken place on February 20, 1821. Three years afterwards they removed with their two little ones to Witham, where they continued to live until 1848, and where the rest of the family first saw the light.

So much is said nowadays about the influence of environment on character that such details may not be without interest. They indicate with sufficient clearness the sort of home in which the future journalist was brought up. In a household such as this, only amusements of the mildest and most innocent description would be allowed. Theatres, had there been any in Witham—which there were not—would have been quite out of the question. One day little John was indeed taken to a circus by his father (there must have been some special reason for this), and he ever afterwards retained a recollection of the event, partly because it was one so unusual in his life, partly on account of a remark his father made on the occasion. There was, of course, a clown in the ring who *would* ask the most impertinent questions of the circus-master, a dignified being in a riding-coat

and resplendent top-boots, and who after the fashion of clowns had painted cheeks and nose of a rich vermilion hue. The Rev. Richard Robinson was not altogether wanting in humour, at least so his son always averred, but he would not laugh. "Only to think," he said, "that this man has an immortal soul and yet can so disfigure and degrade himself." Whether the boy was impressed by this reasoning does not appear, but one thing is certain, and that is that environment counted for very little, in this respect at all events, as will be seen in the sequel.

Witham in the early 'thirties, when young Robinson first began to look about him and to explore the wonders of the world into which he had recently been brought, had not that rollicking character that the patriotic Scot attributed to his native Peebles. It was, however, less dull in some ways than many other country towns of greater pretensions and larger population. In the first place, it was on a main coaching road, and the coachmen's red coats and the blast of their horns as the horses came tearing along daily and pulled up at the White Hart, gave no little animation to the otherwise quiet streets; and then it happened that some notable people lived either in the town or in the immediate vicinity. Among others, there were the Woods, still represented by that gallant and popular soldier Sir Evelyn Wood; the Luards, an old county family (one of the sons became Admiral Luard); the Pattissons; the Shaens, a name well known in connection with law; and the Du Canes, one of whom became Sir Charles Du Cane, Governor of Tasmania, and another Sir Edmund Du Cane, Director of Convict Prisons, in

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which capacity he did so much to reform our penal system on the administrative side.

There was therefore no want of society in the little place. Of course, there as elsewhere, differences of religious views had a strong disintegrating tendency, and in those days church-goers were apt to look even more askance than they do at present at those who attended chapel. Dissenters must have been very strong in the place, judging by the fact vouched for in after years by the pastor's son, that for a quarter of a century that worthy man baptized, married, preached to, and buried nine-tenths of the people. He did much to overcome prejudice wherever it existed, and he was popular with everybody, even though some of his acquaintances would have thought it a sin to cross the threshold of his chapel. It has already been said that he was not altogether wanting in that sense of humour that, as will be shown later, was so marked a characteristic of his more celebrated son. Here is a little story which lends some support to the statement. The worthy preacher used to tell how some poor man who lived near his house expressed a wish, when dying, to see him. Somewhat puzzled by the request, as he knew the man to belong to the Church of England, he went nevertheless to offer such consolation or assistance as was in his power. On going into the house he saw the man's wife, and gave expression to the feeling of surprise in his mind by asking what *induced* them to send for him. The wife turned to her dying husband, who was very deaf, and shouted : "Mr. Robinson says, 'Why the *deuce* did you send for him ?'" Many years afterwards John Leech drew that exquisitely funny little scene representing



a mild-mannered old gentleman in an omnibus quietly asking the conductor as a favour whether he cannot go a little faster, as he has an appointment in the City. "Get along, Jim," shouts the conductor, translating the request into his own vernacular; "there's an old gent inside 'ere a-cussin' and a-swearin' like anythink." It is not unlikely that Leech heard the story of the pastor and the dying man from the lips of the pastor's son, whom he numbered among his friends.

By his own people the Rev. Richard Robinson was almost worshipped. Years after he left Witham the son revisited his old home, and he has left a record of the welcome he received. Already he was a rising journalist in London, but if he is received with open arms, it is not merely because he is a distinguished fellow-townsmen, but because he is the son of their dear old pastor. "On every side," he writes, "are outstretched hands. I can hardly stand it, and have to gulp down certain signs of feeling that rise up within me. Does any one think I take one single iota of this to my own account? No, but I am proud of it, because it testifies to the universal respect in which my father is held. I go out into the chapel yard in the midst of a crowd. At the door stands a neatly dressed old lady who looks wistfully into my face with tears in her eyes. It is my dear old nurse Jane, and never has she had a warmer greeting or more spectators of it than she now experiences. All the people want me to visit them." Then the returned traveller goes to the chapel and hears a sermon from his father's successor. "Oh, the small jokes he indulges in!" he says; "I can scarcely repress a feeling of indignation when I

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think that this commonplace man should occupy the place which belonged to my dear old father, one of the best preachers in the denomination, and one who ever spoke from the very depths of his convictions." At the time this was written the father was still alive, but he had removed to Whitworth, near Rochdale, having received in 1848 a call to minister at his father's old chapel at that place. He died there, in the very house in which he was born, in 1858, in his sixty-first year. His memory is preserved by means of a marble tablet in each of the chapels where he preached for so many years. The existing Independent Chapel at Whitworth was built during his pastorate. It is a small matter, but it is characteristic of the man, that he refused to allow the building to be opened for worship until the entire cost had been paid. In the *Congregational Year-Book* for 1859 he is described as "a man of God, a faithful, affectionate, and earnest preacher."

Witham nowadays has a railway station whence two branch lines diverge to Maldon and Braintree, but modern facilities of locomotion have not made a great change in it. The stage coaches, of which old inhabitants declare no fewer than fifty passed through in the course of every twenty-four hours, are of course no more to be seen. But a description of the little town in 1856, the date of young Robinson's visit to which reference has already been made, gives an idea of what it was like in the old days, and shows to those who know it how little it has changed. "I might have left it," he says, "but a week ago. As I walked slowly along the long, wide street which constitutes nearly half the place, scarcely a new name met the eye. If

the father was gone, the son was in his stead. There was the large draper's shop, the middle-sized draper's shop, and the little draper's shop ; the watchmaker's heir sat as his father used to sit, behind his watches, examining a mainspring with a magnifying-glass screwed in his eye-socket ; the chemist had in his window the same mysterious coloured glass bowls and the identical curiosities, I could almost believe, in the way of huge sponges and ghastly surgical inventions for the relief of human infirmities. The postmaster coming out of his office, though his hair was whitened and his step was feeblor, was the very postmaster into whose letter-box I slipped, with beating heart, my first valentine ; the chief lawyer was driven by in a four-wheeled chair by a fashionably dressed lady whom I found to be the little child I had patronised in her babyhood ; the good doctor stooped a little more, and his voice was somewhat thicker for the pounds of snuff he had taken in the interval, but he was the oracle still ; the naturalist's window, with its stuffed birds, a fox and two squirrels, seemed to have only a few fresh specimens ; and the chatty, scandal-loving hairdresser had his back to the open door—for it was a beautiful sunshiny day—and was hopping round his aproned victim as in the days when the scissors made havoc also with my young locks. The churchyard alone looked changed. The tombstones I remembered were untouched, but there were no longer any vacant spaces, and if the sheep are let in to feed, as was once the wont, I fear me they are but poorly served."

Those persons who know Essex only by repute and who bear in mind the monody by Waller, the

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courtly author of "Sacharissa," on the death of Lady Rich, in which he speaks of "those already curs'd Essexian plains," have no conception of the beauties of some parts at least of that much-maligned county. The rural sights amidst which young Robinson's early boyhood was spent are distinctly and characteristically English. Horace Walpole paid a visit to the place in 1749, and although, in common with most of the wits of his age, he was not much given to descanting upon the beauties of Nature, he says: "What pleased me most in my travels was Dr. Sayer's parsonage at Witham, which he has made one of the most charming villas in England. There are sweet meadows falling down a hill and rising again on t'other side of the prettiest little winding stream you ever saw." Among other beautiful spots in the immediate vicinity is Braxted, with a very fine view towards the estuary of the Blackwater on one side and over a wide wooded landscape on the other.

Persons still living who remember young Robinson in his early days—they are necessarily few after a lapse of some seventy years—speak of him as a naturally intelligent boy, a little shy in manner. Although he became in after life a town man after Dr. Johnson's own heart, he was to the end of his days extremely fond of the country, and could converse intelligently with country people on subjects that interest them. He was always ready, as he expressed it, to make "tender inquiries" after mangel-wurzel and turnips, hay and oats. And he never lost the faculty of distinguishing birds by their notes, an accomplishment which filled some of his Cockney acquaintances with envy. We may feel sure that as a boy he knew where the

## I THE CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL 9

nests of these birds were to be found in the woodlands round about his home. That he was a lovable boy is certain from the enduring friendships he contrived to make during the few years he spent in the quiet little Essex village before he was drawn away into his different spheres of activity. To the end of her days Lady Wood, a dear old lady for whom he entertained the utmost admiration and respect, would treat him with an almost mother-like kindness on the occasions when he visited her, and write him long letters in the friendliest spirit. For her son also he had the warmest regard, and this was reciprocated, as Sir Evelyn has shown on more than one public occasion.

Young Robinson appears to have received the rudiments of education from his father, from whom he early imbibed that hatred of injustice and oppression which he afterwards manifested on so many occasions. Perhaps also the political opinions of his father, who might be described as a cautious Liberal, influenced him in the long run, although their effect was not immediately apparent. On November 18, 1839, when he was eleven years old, he was entered at the Congregational School for sons of Congregational ministers at Lewisham. His school days, it would appear, were not happy. "The period was, perhaps," says an authority on the matter, "the most unfortunate in the school's history. Masters and committee were at daggers drawn; finances were low; discipline was bad; the tone somewhat low. Young Robinson felt out of sympathy with it all." There can be no harm in stating this now. The school has long since been removed to a large handsome building

in the picturesque Caterham Valley, and everything is altered for the better. Of the difference that exists in this respect the old pupil would sometimes speak, for he was always struck by it when he visited the school in later life, as he usually did once a year on the occasion of the athletic sports. In particular, he noticed that the bullying of little boys by the bigger ones had ceased, and he was pleased also to observe the friendliness that existed between masters and pupils where formerly there had been suspicion and ill-feeling.

But bad as things were at the school in the days of his residence, young Robinson contrived to do something to effect an improvement. To this fact emphatic testimony is borne by an old school-fellow, the Rev. John Mark, who says: "He hated hypocrisy and cant. His hatred of tyranny was shown when he became one of a party of six or eight who had been fags, but who, as they were next half passing up to Form I., thus rising to the rank of fag-masters, formed themselves into a company pledging themselves not to have fags, to liberate those in the service of the First Form, and to join together to punish any big fellows who demanded forced service of little boys." Not often would Robinson speak of those evil days in later and happier times. He would, however, occasionally refer to his school experiences and companions. One of the boys, it seems, was a very good story-teller and Robinson's competitor, as he also had a lively imagination. The hated rival, unfortunately for him, had a head curiously like a boat, and just as he got to a thrilling part of a narrative to which other boys

were eagerly listening, Robinson would put in front of him a paper imitation of a boat, and gravely request him at the same time to "go on with his story." This invariably caused explosions of laughter, amidst which the rest of the narrative was lost.

There was a master, too, who always professed to be angry if there was a fight between two of the boys, but whose mind had been nourished upon picturesque descriptions in *Bell's Life* of terrific encounters between champions such as the "Game Chicken" and the "Putney Pet." Etiquette forbade that he should exult over the details of an encounter, but after conventional expressions of disapprobation, he would proceed to put searching queries somewhat in this guise: "What was the beginning of this disgraceful encounter?" "Which boy drew blood first in the course of this disgusting exhibition?" The boys, who knew his weakness, were nothing loath to gratify his curiosity, especially if the victor happened to be popular with his fellows.

No less significant in its way than the part he took in protesting against fagging, was the fact that young Robinson was elected by common consent to the post of Editor of the school *Magazine*. At the present time the *Magazine* of the Congregational School has over sixty pages, handsomely printed and stitched in a stout wrapper. In the early 'forties it existed only in manuscript. No copy of those days appears now to be in existence.

## CHAPTER II

Leaves school—Apprenticeship—At Shepton Mallet—Unitarian influences—The Corn Law agitation—Origin of Dickens's "Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers"—Bedford and Devizes—The Chartists—Mr. Vincent's strange oath.

IN a public speech delivered when presiding at the Newspaper Press Fund dinner, at a period long subsequent to that at present referred to, Robinson took occasion to say: "I have been a journalist from the time when, with a happy cry of freedom, I broke from my school-days and set out with pencil and note-book to fend for myself." Hereupon, a too literal-minded reporter represented him as confessing to having run away from school! It is easy to accept the speaker's assurance that no such suggestion had been intended. As a matter of fact, however, he did all he could, by legitimate means, to escape from a thralldom particularly irksome to one of his enterprising temperament. He seems to have been a thoughtful boy for his age. He knew that to his father, with his slender means and large quiverful, life was a struggle, and he was determined, if possible, to help in improving the circumstances of the family.

At his own solicitation, consequently, he was taken away from school on June 26, 1843, when he was not yet fifteen years of age. It was his



desire to become a journalist, but inexperienced youths are in no great request in any department of the world's activity, and in those days an opening could rarely be found. Newspapers were few and expensive. The best course seemed to be to apprentice the lad to a country firm of booksellers and printers. It was ascertained that a firm named Wason and Dowty, at Shepton Mallet in Somersetshire, were in need of such an apprentice, and terms having been settled, Robinson's father agreeing to pay a premium, which, though comparatively small, no doubt represented a serious sacrifice to him, the young journalist set out on his new career in the month of October of the same year in which he left school. After an affectionate leave-taking from his people, he set out on his travels, going by the railways which had quite recently been opened between Colchester and London and London and Bath.

At Shepton Mallet he was to learn, as his indentures duly set forth, "the art of bookseller and printer," and he set to work with a zest to fathom the mysteries of brevier, bourgeois, minion, leads, spaces, and so forth, as well as the sizes of sheets and the rules for setting up pages so that they follow one another in the right order when the sheets come to be folded. In all this he quickly became proficient, and he never forgot the knowledge thus acquired. To the end of his life he would declare that he could make a very respectable figure at "case," that is, in the work of setting up type, and this knowledge, rare in literary journalists, often stood him in good stead in his dealings with master printers and that rather mysterious functionary the "Father of the Chapel."

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Shepton Mallet is a small agricultural town not very far from Bath, and Wason and Dowty's young apprentice does not seem to have made many acquaintances there. One lasting friendship, however, he did form. In the town there was an important Methodist chapel, of which Mr. Wason was one of the staunch supporters. There was also a Unitarian place of worship, the preacher at which, the Reverend Henry Solly, happened to be a man of literary culture and wide attainments, and young Robinson soon came under the influence of his teaching. That the young man should have been drawn into closer and closer relations with such a teacher is not surprising. In the first place, by a rather odd coincidence, Mr. Solly had married a niece of Miss Shaen of Witham; secondly, he was an enthusiast, and enthusiasm always appeals to generous youth. To tell the truth, this was a time of crisis in the young man's intellectual development. He was in danger of sinking into indifferentism on all subjects. As Mr. Solly afterwards said: "We lent him Channing's works, and finding that he had been drifting far from the severe standard of orthodox and Calvinistic creeds in which he had been brought up, we set before him a view of Christianity of which he had known nothing before, but which rescued him from the dreary scepticism and indifference to all religion into which he was sinking."

Whether or no it be true that the world knows nothing of its greatest men, it is certain that it does not know even the names of some of its benefactors. It may be said of Mr. Solly that all his life he strove hard for the amelioration of the lot of his fellow-men. He was the founder of Working

Men's Clubs for intellectual recreation. Having once conceived the idea of them, he laboured assiduously for its realisation, and at last succeeded in forming a Society and in bringing on to its managing body ladies and gentlemen of all creeds and parties. Cabinet ministers, and even arch-bishops, allowed their names to be associated with dissenting parsons and heterodox laymen, and two or three of the best of the peers were soon added to the list. A fund was started and the experiment was successfully launched.

As a writer Mr. Solly deserved better luck than fell to his lot. His poetical play, *The Shepherd's Dream*, has noble lines which would be greatly admired were they by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, although it is fair to add that in reality the poetical productions of most of the Elizabethan dramatists, whatever people may say about them, are little more read than those of the Reverend Henry Solly. It was not long before young Robinson imbibed all the views of his new friend. He became a Unitarian, in which faith he continued to the end, and he was filled for a brief space in his life with sanguine hopes of the regeneration of mankind at an amazingly early date. It was one of Mr. Solly's crotchets to advocate the meeting together of all classes of the community once a week in each village or district at a sort of ordinary where social distinctions were for the moment to be abolished. With all his learning, in fact, he was as simple and inexperienced in the ways of the world as a child. His schemes, visionary as they sometimes were, were invariably suggested, however, by a heartfelt desire for the welfare of others.

At all events he set his young friend thinking, and he urged him to work in order to improve his position. It was at Mr. Solly's suggestion that he began to study shorthand, Pitman's system, not nearly so well known in those days as it is now, being chosen, perhaps because Pitman's publishing place was at Bath close by. He went through the usual trials of course : found, like David Copperfield under similar circumstances, that when he had taken a note of a sermon at chapel on Sunday, he could no more read it than he could decipher the hieroglyphics on the chemist's bottles. There was nothing for it but diligent practice, and by degrees he became proficient, whereupon he sighed for an opportunity to put his newly acquired gift to some practical use.

Printing and bookselling were not to his taste. In June 1846, after less than three years of his seven years' apprenticeship had expired, he ventured to say as much to his employers, and they agreed, with the consent of his father, to release him. Years afterwards he came to know a clever satirical writer, Mr. Aglen Dowty, the reputed author of a work called *The Coming K.*, which made quite a sensation early in the 'seventies, and the writer of much clever verse in the Christmas numbers of *Truth* and elsewhere, to say nothing of some early attempts in humorous prose published under the pseudonym of O. P. Q. Philander Smiff in the *London Figaro*. This gentleman is the son of Mr. Dowty of the firm of Wason and Dowty.

If young Robinson did not realise the gravity of the step he was taking in throwing up a sure, even though a poor living, it was his own fault.

Here is a letter from an editor at Worcester to whom he applied for employment :—

WORCESTER, Jan. 14, 1846.

SIR—In reply to your communication of the 4th inst., I have to advise you by all means not to sacrifice a large premium, but to remain in your present situation and to avail yourself of the time it will afford you in study. I have found that a knowledge of shorthand is but one requisite out of many which a reporter ought to possess. If he has ambition and is not content to remain in a dull country town at perhaps 30s. a week, he must read deeply, in particular geography, history, Latin and French, our own best authors, and besides have a general knowledge of the business world and the histories of our public men and public matters. This is a tolerably wide range of subjects to become acquainted with, but many a young man has foundered in consequence of putting to sea in too shallow a boat.

With regard to shorthand, I always have used in my verbatim reports Harding's, with alterations and adaptations of my own. As you have been learning Phonography, you will now find it difficult to change. I have never yet known a Phonographer able to do anything *practically*, and that of course is the rub.

As to your application for a situation, I can only say that advertisements for reporters appear very rarely, and when they do there are a hundred applications immediately. The best plan is to appear personally in the field and not to rely on advertisements or the recommendations of friends.—I am, Sir, your obedient st.,

J. NOAKE.

Mr. Robinson.

A kind heart must have dictated such a letter to an obscure youth, and there is sound sense in much of it. It is rather startling, however, in these days, when probably nine reporters out of

every ten use Pitman's shorthand (Phonography), that a newspaper editor in 1846 thought there was nothing practical in it. Young Robinson does not appear to have been discouraged by Mr. Noake's rather formidable description of the attainments of a true reporter, for it was only five months after the receipt of the above letter that he applied for and obtained, in answer to an advertisement, the post of sub-editor and reporter on the *Bedford Mercury*.

Already he had given some indication that he had an eye for what is known in Fleet Street as "copy." About the time that Mr. Noake's letter was written the agitation against the Corn Laws was at its height, and young Robinson was present at a meeting held in the village of Bremhill, in Wiltshire, to protest against the taxation of the people's food. It was on a moonlight night, for the working people could only meet after the day's toil was done, and young Robinson stood near a waggon under a tree, facing a crowd of agricultural labourers, men and women. Bread was fearfully dear and wages were frightfully low. The poor fellows knew nothing of political economy, but they had heard the cry of "cheap bread," and they braved their masters' anger and met round that tree to petition Parliament to let the corn ships in the offing discharge their golden freight without a tax.

A poor woman stood up in the waggon—and one could see that ere long another little soul would have to join the terrible life-fight—and she said with intense energy: "They say we be protected. If we be protected, we be starved." Her name was Lucy Simpkins. The woman's words and manner struck the young listener under the

tree, and it occurred to him that some account of the scene would be of interest. He therefore posted a descriptive paragraph to the London *Daily News*, which had recently been started under the editorship of Charles Dickens. The paragraph duly appeared and attracted the attention of Dickens, who thereupon wrote some stirring verses on the subject which appeared in the issue of that paper for February 14, 1846. Although they have been reprinted on at least one occasion, these verses do not usually figure in Dickens's works, and many even of the professed admirers of that writer have probably never heard of them, so that, perhaps, no apology is needed for reproducing them here.

#### HYMN OF THE WILTSHIRE LABOURERS

O God, who by Thy Prophet's hand  
 Didst smite the rocky brake,  
 Whence water came, at Thy command,  
 Thy people's thirst to slake ;  
 Strike now upon this granite wall,  
 Stern, obdurate and high ;  
 And let some drops of pity fall  
 For us, who starve and die !

The God who took a little child  
 And set him in the midst,  
 And promised him His mercy mild,  
 As by Thy Son Thou didst ;  
 Look down upon our children dear,  
 So gaunt, so cold, so spare,  
 And let their images appear  
 Where lords and gentry are !

O God, teach them to feel how we,  
 When our poor infants droop,  
 Are weakened in our trust in Thee,  
 And how our spirits stoop ;

For in Thy rest, so bright and fair,  
 All tears and sorrows sleep,  
 And their young looks, so full of care,  
 Would make Thine Angels weep !

The God who with His finger drew  
 The judgment coming on,  
 Write, for these men, what must ensue,  
 Ere many years be gone !  
 O God, whose bow is in the sky,  
 Let them not brave and dare,  
 Until they look (too late) on high,  
 And see an arrow there !

O God, remind them ! In the bread  
 They break upon the knee,  
 These sacred words may yet be read,  
 "In memory of Me."  
 O God, remind them ! of His sweet  
 Compassion for the poor,  
 And how He gave them bread to eat,  
 And went from door to door.

It was at Bedford, however, that young Robinson first gained a real insight into journalism, and considering his inexperience he acquitted himself well. Like all beginners who are worth their salt, he was very dissatisfied with his first effort, a report of a meeting. On the following Saturday morning when it was to appear in the glory of print, as he sat at breakfast in his solitary lodgings, he heard a tread upon the stairs, the door of his room was thrown open, and the editor appeared with a copy of the paper in his hand. "Hullo !" he thought, "now I am in for it." But not at all. The editor was delighted. "It is very good, Mr. Robinson," he said ; "you will do." As it turned out though, the paper was not long in want of contributors, however good their work. It was in financial difficulties, and



the publication had to be discontinued. The sub-editor again consulted the advertisement columns, and he soon found himself engaged as reporter on the *Wiltshire Independent* at Devizes.

Accordingly he set his face once more towards the west, in the month of November 1846, and he soon began in his new capacity to lay in a stock of experience that proved invaluable in the future. His district was a large one, and he had to travel about in a light vehicle, attending and reporting political meetings, sales of farming stock, meetings of public bodies : gatherings, in short, of all sorts in which country newspaper readers take an interest. The period was an eventful one in our history, and there was plenty of excitement. The Bill for the gradual extinction of the duty on bread-stuffs had just become law, but although the Anti-Corn Law League had been dissolved, the operation had been effected in such a manner that the original promoters were ready to renew their activity at any moment should danger threaten, while the Protectionists, dismayed by the defection from their cause of Sir Robert Peel, were yet full of confidence that their banner would ultimately be carried to victory.

The question of Free Trade *versus* Protection was fiercely discussed, and the Chartists were active. Many a Free Trade meeting did the youthful reporter see broken up by the Chartists, who looked upon the agitation against the Corn Laws as one that was destined only to benefit wealthy manufacturers and the powerful middle classes. The Chartists also came in pretty frequently for rough treatment, the mass of well-to-do people and not a small proportion of the

labouring classes, being hostile to their views. On one occasion the well-known Chartist lecturer Henry Vincent went down to a meeting in some small town in Wiltshire, and was seized by a gang of sturdy ruffians who ducked him in a horse-pond, and when he was in a half-drowned condition made him swear a solemn oath he would never set foot in the place again. Young Robinson was a witness of the scene, which he reported for his newspaper. Years afterwards he met Mr. Vincent and asked him whether he considered an oath taken under such circumstances as binding. "Certainly," was the reply ; "I should never go to the place again."

## CHAPTER III

In London—The *Inquirer*—Newspapers half-a-century ago—Expresses and couriers—Douglas Jerrold's paper—Victor Hugo's gratitude—The Unitarian omnibus and the Chamberlain family—"Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart"—A versatile nobleman.

THINGS went on very well for some months at Devizes. Then came a frost, a killing frost. The *Wiltshire Independent*, like the *Bedford Mercury*, and, as may be surmised, a good many other newspapers in those days of artificial dearness and general ignorance among the population, was not flourishing, and before long the proprietor, from motives of retrenchment, had to dispense with the services of his promising young recruit, who returned to his parents' home dejected in soul and disgusted with fortune.

While at Devizes he had sent reports of the local markets to the *Daily News*, early renowned for its commercial intelligence. Very shrewdly he had endeavoured to secure a footing on the Liberal journal, by offering to send such contributions in return for a free copy of the paper every day. The *Daily News*, it must be remembered, was then published at fivepence, like most other daily papers issued in the metropolis. The offer was accepted by the secretary, Mr. H. J. Lincoln, afterwards well known as the musical critic of

the paper, in which post he succeeded Mr. George Hogarth, Dickens's father-in-law. Then he applied twice to the authorities in Bouverie Street for a permanent position on their staff. The answer to the second application, in June 1847, contained no greater encouragement than that his application should be "borne in mind." The recipient of this cold douche was not to be daunted. In the end, he carried his point; but before this event took place several years were to elapse, during which many things happened.

Meanwhile there was one friend who believed in him. Mr. Solly was acquainted with Mr. Richard Kinder, whose name is well known in connection with the printing business in London and who at that time was proprietor of the little weekly paper called the *Inquirer*, the organ of the Unitarian dissenters. He wrote to Mr. Kinder a warm letter of recommendation of his *protégé*, who was promptly appointed to the post of sub-editor of the paper, which happened fortunately to be vacant. With what joy the young sub-editor came up to London may be imagined. His new post, it is true, offered little scope for the display of journalistic enterprise or foresight, but from some points of view it promised exceedingly well for his future. For the first time he breathed a literary atmosphere. To the principal leading-article writers, Dr. Sadler and Mr. John Lalor (pronounced Lawler), and especially to the latter, he ever afterwards acknowledged his deep obligation. They helped to form his style and to rid it of those commonplaces, those hackneyed phrases from which probably no young newspaper writer was ever entirely free.

In those days Hampstead was the Mecca from which the prophets of the Unitarian body enlightened the world through the columns of their favourite organ. Dr. Sadler was a bachelor who lived in comfortable lodgings in the centre of the village, and near neighbours of his were Mr. Lalor, Mr. Richard Holt Hutton, afterwards famous from his connection with the *Spectator*, Mr. Walter Bagehot, and Mr. T. S. Osler, to all of whom the *Inquirer* was indebted for contributions. Mr. Lalor had edited the *Morning Chronicle*, the great rival in those days to the *Times*, until failing health had compelled him to resign. It was thought that the conduct of a weekly paper would not be too arduous for him, but his weakness increasing, much of the work was thrown upon the new sub-editor. Mr. Lalor, however, was able to guide his young assistant and also to repress his exuberances, ruthlessly cutting out what the writer doubtless considered his finest passages. The discipline was severe, but the neophyte had implicit faith in the literary skill of his teacher, one of whose articles, an attack on Carlyle for his defence of West Indian slavery in the first of the *Latter Day Pamphlets*, was copied verbatim, with due acknowledgment, into the *Daily News*, and may be said afterwards to have gone the round of the world's press.

One great advantage the new sub-editor possessed consisted in the importance of the work entrusted to him. He was barely twenty-one years of age when there appeared a long review from his pen of Hepworth Dixon's *John Howard and the Prison-World of Europe*, pleasantly written and with a vein of humanitarian sympathy running through it.

Of course he was immensely proud of his work, but not very long afterwards his self-satisfaction received a momentary check. One morning a respected minister from the country called at the office in Green Arbour Court and stopped to chat with the reviewer. Suddenly he asked : " Who is it, by the way, who writes your reviews ? " The hearer's eyes glistened. " Do you like them ? " he inquired. " Well," was the rejoinder, " they are evidently written by *somebody who is very young*."

While the young writer was thus daily acquiring knowledge of the better side of journalism, his position on the *Inquirer*, although not very lucrative, gained for him influential friends. Mr. Kinder introduced him to Mr. Woodfall (the names are well known in association to this day), and Mr. Woodfall invited him to his house in Dean's Yard, where there used to gather together men of science and learning, travellers, publishers, artists : in short, all sorts of notabilities. There he first met Douglas Jerrold, Sir Edward Creasy, Sir Joseph Arnould, Mr. Gilbert à Beckett. There also he made the acquaintance of a bright, intelligent old lady, with white hair, a daughter of Henry Sampson Woodfall, Junius's Woodfall of the *Public Advertiser*.

Douglas Jerrold, then at the height of his reputation, seems to have taken rather a fancy to the young man, whose demeanour at these gatherings was modest, but who always proved when drawn out by his elders that he had something to say, and said it well. Jerrold had then given up the paper which had gone by his name. It was now called the *Weekly News and Chronicle*, and it had a very small circulation, for there was nothing striking about it, very little outlay being incurred by the

proprietor in the matter of news. He heard they wanted a sub-editor, said the great little author and wit; would Mr. Robinson care to undertake the work? Mr. Robinson was only too delighted, and in due course he was appointed to the vacant post.

Thus, after all his struggles, he had at length become a London journalist, for the *Inquirer* was a literary production, rather than a newspaper in the strict sense of the term. To complete the story of his connection with the Unitarian organ it may be mentioned here that he continued for several years to contribute to its columns, until the many calls upon his time compelled him to discontinue this portion of his labours. At a later date he joined the Rev. T. L. Marshall and Mr. E. T. Whitfield in purchasing the paper, but again he found the responsibility a trouble amidst his other occupations, and he disposed of his share to Mr. Marshall.

The world of London journalism into which he had now entered, just fifty-two years ago, was a very different world from that of the present day. Telegraphing was in its infancy and was little used; there were no cables to foreign countries; the rotary press had not been invented, and the old flat printing presses were tedious and slow; there were practically no agencies for the dissemination of general news from all parts of the kingdom and of foreign countries. Above all, newspaper enterprise was crippled by the taxes on knowledge. There was a tax on paper, a stamp duty of one penny on every copy of a newspaper, and a duty of eighteenpence on every advertisement, however short. There were subtle men, moreover, at Somerset House in those days, and in the interest of the Fisc they put a most liberal interpretation

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on the meaning of the word "advertisement" in the Act of Parliament. They systematically went through the news columns of every paper, and declared that this paragraph or that paragraph was liable to the duty. Book reviews even were sometimes made to pay toll in this way, and announcements of forthcoming books seldom escaped.

Halfpenny newspapers are so numerous nowadays that no one wonders any longer "how it is done." In 1852 it could not have been done, or rather it could only have been done by a rich capitalist determined to lose a large fortune yearly. A half-century ago few people bought a newspaper outright. Nearly everybody who read one at all—and the great majority probably did not—used to pay for the loan of one, and only the bookseller and newsagent's best customers could get a sight of the news early in the day. Even a paper three or four days old was not looked upon, except by well-to-do people, as waste paper. Somebody was always glad to have it to read. Yet the newspapers of fifty years ago, in spite of the cruel burdens under which they suffered, were by no means without enterprise. Already, several years earlier, hundreds of pounds a month were spent by at least three papers for the conveyance of the India mails overland from Marseilles.

That was in 1846, when the railway from Paris to Boulogne was as yet open only to Amiens, half-way, although it was shortly expected to be opened to Abbeville, which is about 25 miles nearer to London. There was a fierce competition to get those India mails first, and the couriers, some of whose names, as for instance Vapard père, Vapard fils, Sans Pouce (an evident nickname), Jullien, Sergent,



and Baptiste, have come down to us, were noted for their powers of endurance, as also, it is to be feared, for their habit of taxing the capacity of the poor beasts on whose backs they sat, booted and spurred. It is easy to see that under these conditions there were more possibilities of stealing a march on one's rivals than there are in these days when almost every important event is made known all over the world by the telegraph a few minutes after it takes place.

The new sub-editor of the *Weekly News and Chronicle*, we may be sure, kept his eyes open to anything in the way of news that came within his view, and we may feel equally sure that not many "expresses," as specially conveyed messages were called, ever came his way. Fortunately for him, his proprietor and editor, Mr. John Sheehan, was generally away, so that he had that free hand which so readily enables a young man to show of what he is capable. Mr. Sheehan appears to have been an amiable man and a competent journalist. Writing to invite his sub-editor to dinner at his house, Gore Lodge, Kensington, on June 21, 1852, he speaks at the same time in high terms of his industry and of the quality of his work.

Not much special news, it has been said, came to the *Weekly News*, but the sub-editor did his best to make up for that by the exercise of a little ingenuity. He also wrote articles on various subjects, which were frequently quoted by other papers, and which brought eulogistic letters from admiring readers. One rather good hit he made by drawing an epistle from Victor Hugo. Hugo's son, Charles, at that time was editing the *Evénement* newspaper in Paris, and under the infamous Press laws of the sham Republic, which was soon to proclaim itself the

Second Empire, he had been imprisoned for writing an article against capital punishment. The article in question was suggested by the horrible accounts of the execution of a criminal named Montcharmant, who plunged and kicked so fiercely that two executioners were no less than an hour in getting him into position on the guillotine. "What had this man done against Society?" asked young Hugo. "He had killed. What was Society doing to this man? Why, making him a martyr."

The sentence on the writer of these words (who, on the assumption that the style is the man, was a true chip of the old block) was six months' imprisonment and a fine. Robinson got up an address to him from his English brethren of the pen, in which they expressed, or rather he expressed for them, indignation at such an outrage on the liberty of discussion, and this being engrossed on parchment and signed by Douglas Jerrold, Mark Lemon, and other writers, as well as by the editors of a large number of newspapers in London and the provinces, was forthwith despatched to Paris. The address, of course, the writer being young and impetuous, did not mince matters, so that the *Evénement*, in giving publicity to it both in French and English, deemed it prudent to omit certain passages, which are represented in that paper by asterisks. This was just before the *Coup d'Etat*. Victor Hugo wrote from Paris a letter, of which the following is a translation:—

PARIS, August 20, 1851.

SIR—I leave my son to speak for himself. It is for him to tell you; it is for him to tell your honourable brethren of the press how we have been touched by the expressions of sympathy which have penetrated into his prison. You more than reward him; you glorify him.

It will be the greatest honour of his life to have been the cause of such a manifestation. That manifestation is more than a letter addressed by free writers to a writer oppressed ; it is a manifestation of the worthy alliance of all the forces of civilisation advancing henceforth towards a common goal ; it is the communion of two great peoples in an idea of humanity.

Receive, Sir, and please convey to your honourable friends the expression of my most cordial feeling and my profound gratitude.

VICTOR HUGO.

Monsieur J. R. Robinson.

Under the same cover was a long and very enthusiastic letter from the son, dated from the Prison of the Conciergerie.

All this was, of course, very useful matter to the *Weekly News*, although no one who knew the author of the petition will doubt for a moment the sincerity of that document, however probable it may be that a keen journalistic instinct had something to do with its inception.

That the energetic young journalist very early made his mark is shown by the fact that he soon had offers from other quarters. One of the most tempting of these was from the proprietors of the *Newcastle Chronicle*, and it was very nearly accepted. He actually paid a visit to the Tyneside city, but to him it seemed dull, dreary, and grimy, and he fled back to London. The fact also that he was elected at twenty-six years of age a professional member of the Guild of Literature and Art, in which Dickens and Bulwer Lytton took so deep an interest, and of which more will be said hereafter, was not without significance, and at the same time Mr. (now Sir) William Howard Russell, then a comparatively obscure working journalist, engaged him as a deputy to write

London letters to an Irish paper, the letter offering the work being dated from 7 Millman Street, Bedford Row, on February 14, 1854.

Then, in January 1855, there was a vacancy for an Editor of the *Express*, a sort of evening edition of the *Daily News*, and Mr. Woodfall, who had an interest in the two papers, recommended Robinson so strongly that he received the appointment. His life for many years after this was chiefly a record of ceaseless professional activity, for he was greedy for work, and contributed at the same time to the *Daily News* and his own paper the *Express*, the *Cambridge Independent*, and the *Bury and Norwich Post*, to which were added after a time two American papers. When he entered upon his duties in Bouverie Street the Crimean war was in progress, and this kept him constantly on the stretch, for the public were eager for the news, which dribbled through at odd times and in all sorts of odd ways. Frequently he would be up all night when it was thought that critical events must have happened. In any case it was early morning before he had finished, and then he would walk through the lonely streets, past Bloomsbury Square and Russell Square, to his bachelor home near University College Hospital.

Here is an impression of these times which he has left in his own handwriting :—

How often have I paced through those squares on a dark winter's morning between half-past two and half-past three and seen nothing alive save a tom-cat ! A faint light here and there suggests a sick-room, and if you know what that is yourself, you sigh as you go on. To think that all those houses are full of human folk and that they should all be so still !

Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep.

The sounds, too, of London, the rattle of wheels, the hum of voices, the shouts of revellers, are heard no longer. They die away by about three, when all is still, but in half an hour there are dropping shots of sound, and soon the heavy waggons on their way to Covent Garden come rumbling by, the advance guard of the waking millions.

An exquisite little picture this, surely, of London from an unaccustomed point of view, with an impressive feeling in it of awe and loneliness.

At length the bachelor lodgings were given up. In 1859 he was married, after a courtship extending over some three years. That visit to his native place already referred to had determined his fate. Amongst the neighbours of the Robinson family were the Grangers, substantial, well-to-do farmers, and it appears to be literally true that he fell in love with the daughter, Jane, at first sight. In the manuscript account of the visit written at the time he calls her the "pretty daughter," and he narrates how he walked with her to the village of Rivenhall, where they took tea with friends. He adds significantly: "As to that walk, I dare say some inquisitive people would like to know how it passed off. But I am not going to gratify them. All I shall say is, that to me it was a delightful walk, that my companion pleased me immensely, and that I feel very very happy when I think of it. More than that, I am not going to tell any one." The marriage was thus announced in the papers:—

July 14th, 1859, at Lion Walk, Colchester, by the Rev. T. B. Davids, John R. Robinson, Esq., to Jane Mapes, youngest daughter of the late W. Granger, Esq., of the Grange, Wickham Bishops, Essex.

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Meanwhile, the responsibilities of his position, to say nothing of the natural growth of his mind, had had their almost inevitable effect in sobering down his views upon public affairs, a process that had, doubtless, been assisted by the course of public events. That "wonder-year," 1848, when thrones had been tottering all over Europe, had been succeeded by several years during which the old order had been re-established and everything seemed to be going on as in the old humdrum days. The physical-force Chartists had collapsed utterly, and no one saw more clearly than he how vain had been the threats of men whose armies of mechanics, labourers, and shopmen were ever ready to fly like a flock of sheep at the appearance of a handful of soldiers of the line. Clearly the millennium was not to be yet, even supposing that it would have been inaugurated with the enactment of manhood suffrage, annual Parliaments, and the payment of the representatives of the people.

At the same time he firmly adhered to his new religious faith, and there was no more assiduous attendant at the services at Essex Street Chapel, where the preacher was the Rev. Thomas Madge. It has often been remarked that the Unitarians, although a small body, number among them many notable persons. Mr. Madge at that time had a remarkable congregation. In a long line every Sunday in the little street off the Strand might be seen the carriages of Lord Lovelace, Lady Byron, Lord Zetland, Mr. Justice Byles, Mr. Justice Crompton, and half-a-dozen Members of Parliament. Lady Lovelace was Byron's "Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart." She was very regular in her attendance, though in course of time, as her

habit became known, she was much annoyed at being persistently stared at by strangers who went there that they might be able to say they had seen the poet's only daughter.

Another regular attendant was a tall, slim, pale-faced youth named Joseph Chamberlain. The sub-editor of the *Weekly News and Chronicle* used to come with him from Highbury, where they both lived at that time, in a vehicle called the "Unitarian omnibus," which used to convey a party of the faithful to Essex Street every Sunday. Other occupants of the vehicle were Mr. William Sharpe, the archæologist, and his daughter, and Mr. Chamberlain's father. The elder Chamberlain Robinson described as a grave, amiable man who, at a later period, had the supreme merit in his eyes of being in favour of the North in the American Civil War. Robinson's attitude in that contest will be referred to later on, but it may just be mentioned here that Mr. Sharpe favoured the South, and that Robinson and the elder Chamberlain concluded an offensive and defensive alliance against him.

Young Chamberlain spoke very little, and certainly no one in the Unitarian omnibus suspected what a power he was destined to become in the State. One of the strangest characters in Mr. Madge's congregation was Lord Zetland. He was the head of the English Turf, and he had a strong liking for theology of the Channing type. One of his hobbies was to go and hear sermons in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, and when he heard one that pleased him, he would do all he could to persuade the preacher to publish it, often to the reverend gentleman's sad disadvantage from a financial point of view.

By degrees Robinson became more and more intimately associated with the conduct of the *Daily News*, and in 1868, when it was reduced in price to a penny, he was formally appointed manager. Thenceforth his career was one of unbroken prosperity. His position in the Unitarian body had already been recognised in 1867 by his appointment to a seat on the Board of Trustees of Dr. Williams's Library, and in after years he was chosen as Chairman to preside over the annual dinners of the Newspaper Press Fund, which represents the working journalists, and of the Newspaper Society, which looks after the interests of the newspaper proprietors. The circumstances under which he was offered and accepted a knighthood will be narrated in a later chapter. One dark shadow came across his life in 1876. In that year his wife died, after seventeen years of happy wedded life, during which nothing happened to disturb the feeling of mutual love and respect between husband and wife. The blow, as he said long afterwards, was a crushing one. Time naturally softened the grief he experienced, although he never ceased to lament the loss of his gentle and affectionate partner.

But in thus summarising the principal events of a comparatively uneventful life, we have been anticipating. In the recollections that follow, we must step backwards to the days when the young journalist, as he then was, first had an opportunity of studying the ways of men in Parliament.



## CHAPTER IV

Glimpses of Parliament—Reporters and prayers—Parliamentary manners in other days—Oratory in the Commons—An unsuccessful *début*—Oranges and ‘speakers’—Laxity with regard to Private Bills—Irishmen and Bills—Anecdotes of Members.

AMONG the multifarious duties of the sub-editor of the *Weekly News and Chronicle* was that of supplying to his paper sketches of the proceedings in the Houses of Lords and Commons during the Parliamentary session. It is worthy of note perhaps that these contributions were subscribed with the initials “J. R. R.,” notwithstanding that old-fashioned editors were as a rule strongly opposed to anything like a breach of the rule of anonymity in journalism, which has been so greatly relaxed in recent years. They are light and lively contributions, giving in a graphic and picturesque style the striking or amusing incidents of a sitting, and summarising very briefly the nature of the business done, if any. The style of thing was not new, for since the days when Dr. Johnson used to publish in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* his “Debates of the Senate of Lilliput,” wherein, as he afterwards confessed, he took care never to let the Whig dogs have the best of the argument; there have been at all times men who have endeavoured to describe

our legislators at work in such a way as to entertain the reader.

One of the best-known hands of the kind was a man named White, a doorkeeper of the House of Commons, whose position naturally gave him great advantages, since he was not liable to be turned out as were the occupants of the Reporters' Gallery at the cry of "Strangers," a favourite dodge in his day of members who wanted to call attention to themselves or to some motion in which they were interested. White had been a bookseller in Bedford and had taken an active interest in local politics there. The story went that he had obtained his appointment by judicious heckling of candidates who put up in the all-powerful Russell interest. At all events he was a Bedford man, and Lord Charles Russell was Sergeant-at-Arms when White was suddenly thrust into a position of less freedom and more responsibility than that which he had previously occupied. In his journalistic capacity he had had few competitors, but it now became evident that he had a new and formidable one. The young journalist, even now barely four-and-twenty years of age, who supplied the sketches to the *Weekly News*, and shortly afterwards to certain country papers, took to the work with wonderful ease, and his readers might have imagined he had given the attention of a lifetime to the ways of men in the great council of the nation.

The first thing that struck him was the absurdity of excluding the reporters during prayers. Those unhappy outcasts, who include not only reporters in the strict sense of the term, but editors, summary-writers and leader-writers, could just see the members through a glass door as they were at

their devotions, but in vain did they, if so minded, strain their ears to catch the words of the Chaplain. The absurd practice, strange to say, continues to the present day. Is it, one might ask, because our legislators think journalists have already performed the duty of private worship at their homes before coming down to the House, or that the salvation of such men is regarded as hopeless? However that may be, it is certain that on the floor of the House men of all creeds, Churchmen, Dissenters, Agnostics, Jews (there were of course no Jews in the House in 1852, although the day was close at hand when they were to be admitted), or Mohammedans, if there are any, are freely allowed the benefit of the Chaplain's ministrations, and find it to their advantage to attend to them, since members who are present at prayers are entitled to retain a place for the whole evening by putting their cards on the bench at the back of their seats. The House, however, may be allowed to know best its own spiritual needs, in which connection it may just be hinted that a certain rather prominent politician—a useful public servant—once naïvely inquired where he could get a copy of the prayers. Evidently he was not familiar with the Church of England Prayer-Book.

The real fact, of course, is that the exclusion of the reporters early in the sitting is due to that invincible dislike of the press which was manifested by Parliament in former times, and which even yet is not altogether eradicated. Some of the old school of Parliamentarians would openly display their hostility to any writer for the press whom they happened to come across. One evening Lord Henry Lennox—the same whom *Punch* wickedly

accused of having invented a machine into which other men's works were put, when, lo ! there came out a brand-new novel—was standing at one of the bars drinking. A reporter and "lobby correspondent," one Hughes, came along. "Hullo !" said Lord Henry, "put that down in your notebook ; I have just drunk a glass of wine." Hughes was not at all taken aback. "Well, I certainly would," he said, "if I saw your Lordship drink a glass of water." The repartee, it need hardly be said, was a mere piece of good-humoured banter, spoken for effect, and not intended to be taken seriously.

But there were some members in those days to whom the imputation so delicately conveyed would have applied with far more truth than it did to Lord Henry Lennox. Times had changed since leaders of great parties, like Fox and Sheridan, thought it no disgrace to drink themselves almost daily into a state of helpless intoxication—were rather proud of it indeed, as stamping them men of fashion. The three-bottle men were probably all dead fifty years ago, but some few of their successors at least were not far from emulating their feats. A quarter of a century after his first introduction to the Reporters' Gallery, Robinson notes some disgraceful scenes that were still not uncommon in the House. The curious in such matters will look in vain in the pages of Hansard for evidence of what is here asserted : stenography, as Hugo said, has ears but no eyes. Nor will a perusal of files of old newspapers afford any enlightenment. It is inevitable that the law of libel, salutary as it is in checking abuses that might become well-nigh intolerable, operates in a good many cases in a manner contrary to the public interest.

He would be a bold newspaper writer who would say in the course of an article descriptive of the proceedings of one of the two Houses that such or such a person had attended in his place in Parliament in a state of intoxication and hindered the course of public legislation; and, anyhow, no editor would pass such a statement for publication. Often it is difficult to obtain technical proof of a thing that is notorious, while legal proceedings are costly, uncertain, and vexatious; and, again, journalists, like other folk, know the value of a quiet life. Yet the fact remains that, according to the testimony of an unimpeachable witness who had the evidence of his own eyes and ears to go upon, there were formerly black sheep in the House of Commons—men who habitually, night after night, after a certain hour, were Bacchanalian and noisy. In one evening he saw two cases of downright intoxication. A clever young member talked such incoherent nonsense that the House roared with laughter, and, what is worse, persisted in putting coarse constructions upon his wild and rambling words.

The second case was that of a lawyer, whose utterances were so disconnected and absurd, that Mr. Gladstone, in charity, suggested that he should reserve his remarks to a later period of the discussion, adding that no good could come of his debating the question at that particular moment. The House perfectly understood this advice, and shouted approvingly "Hear, hear!" Directly afterwards there was a loud titter as the offender walked up the floor with great difficulty, and, seating himself by Mr. Gladstone's side, endeavoured to enter into a private explanation with the peculiarly refined and sensitive statesman who had felt com-

pelled to take notice of his condition. Strangely enough, facts such as these were notorious at a time when few patriotic Englishmen failed to be impressed by accounts of alleged excesses of members of the United States Congress. The implied contrast, of course, was with our House of Commons, where, it was tacitly assumed, our representatives were as sober as bishops.

Beyond all question, the House of Commons has changed for the better since that period, even though every one of its 670 members may not at the present moment come up to the episcopal standard of sobriety. Students of the psychology of the House are apt to observe that its proceedings get much less decorous after the dinner-hour. Young bloods, who have previously been satisfied with calling out "Hear, hear!" or "No, no!" in a more or less subdued tone, make their appearance in twos and threes, and shout with much gusto "Order!" or "Question!" or "'Vide, 'vide, 'vide!"

As regards visitors, elaborate precautions are taken to prevent their making the slightest sound. The occupant of a place in the Strangers' Gallery must not take notes, he must not glance at a newspaper, he must not use an opera-glass, he must not speak to his neighbour, he must not eat a sandwich or a biscuit—or at all events he must not be detected in the act of eating one;—and what would happen if he ventured to utter a sound of disapprobation or even of approval of the proceedings going on below him, one is almost afraid to surmise. One day a royal duke—the Duke of Cambridge—was present when the question of the Suffrage was being discussed, and, greatly daring, cheered when Mr. Disraeli predicted the ruin of the Constitution

in the event of the electoral *status quo* being interfered with. A member of the reigning family, however, may venture to do things that are not permitted to ordinary mortals, and personally the Duke was always popular. He had not the same excuse, however, as another interrupter, who sorely spoiled the flow of Lord Stanley's eloquence in the course of one of the debates on the Reform Bill of 1859. This was a baby in arms, who suddenly set up a yell so piercing that the orator stopped short. The eyes of all members were directed towards the corner of the gallery whence the sound proceeded, and scandalised officials promptly ejected baby and mother from the august precincts.

On the floor of the House the standard of decorum is altogether different. On ordinary occasions, when the business before the House is of limited interest, or a poor speaker is on his legs, nothing strikes a stranger more than the noise, the incessant clatter of conversation, the restless moving about, the profound indifference of nine-tenths of those present to the remarks that are being addressed to them. How speakers can go on under such conditions it is difficult to understand, but many there are who can do so for an hour or more without showing the least annoyance or mental perturbation. Men there are, however, whom the House will always listen to: brilliant orators, responsible statesmen, and, it should be added to the credit of Parliament, men who, no matter what their views, show a knowledge of the subject under discussion, or young beginners.

To the last-named class much indulgence is always shown. It is a nervous ordeal, however, for the stoutest-hearted man to make his *début* as a

speaker before the nation's representatives. Did not Mr. Gladstone himself confess to a feeling of apprehension at addressing the House years after his maiden speech had been delivered? Many a man of undoubted courage has broken down. No one doubts that Lord Milton, Lord Fitzwilliam's late son, was a brave man. As a traveller he had earned distinction, and he had escaped perils of all kinds in the Rocky Mountains and elsewhere. Being returned to Parliament in 1867, he got up one day in Committee, and, after the customary encouraging cheer, which does more probably to unsettle the thoughts of the neophyte than to put him at his ease, he was seen to turn ghastly pale. Evidently he was trying to utter something, but no sound was heard, and soon he sat down discomfited.

Considering how widely prevalent is that curious mental disease known as stage fright, the only matter for surprise is that such occurrences are not more common. Practised speakers in the House in those days, the men who would keep on their legs for an hour or more, almost invariably paused at intervals to suck an orange. If an honourable member was seen in the lobby buying two or three oranges at the semicircular counter where they were exposed for sale, it might safely be assumed that he had designs on the ear of the House. The orange used, in fact, to signify a long speech, and was originally affected more particularly by Chancellors of the Exchequer on Budget nights. The Chancellors' example spread and the practice became general. Practically every orator would bring at least one orange, which he would place upon his seat when he rose, but not all had the necessary dexterity and self-command



to squeeze the juice of the fruit between the lips in the midst of a speech.

The general style of oratory in the Commons was rather more ornate half-a-century ago than it is to-day. It is certain that classical citations were more frequent, although the habit of quoting Greek had practically departed, and even Virgil and Horace were less popular than they had been. In other respects the House of Commons was very much what it is now. There was the same competition to catch the Speaker's eye ; the same look of sullen acquiescence in the face of Mr. Smith, who, having thought he had succeeded, and having begun, "Sir, it was once observed by the great Mr. Pitt," had heard the Speaker call for Mr. Brown, and had therefore had to sit down again. Then as now, also, much quiet work was done unseen by men who seldom or perhaps never made a set speech on the floor of the House. Immense interests are concerned in the private bills that are being considered by committees in certain private rooms off the corridor.

Fierce wars rage in those rooms, where counsel are heard declaiming in artificial anger and where witnesses are elbowing and jostling each other. Meanwhile Peebles or Stoke Pogis is in a fever of excitement, expecting hourly to receive a telegram announcing the fate of some local measure. Parliament, of course, decides the question whether the bill shall pass or not, but Parliament as a body usually cares not a brass farthing about it. One night, for instance, in July 1881, Mr. Labouchere noticed that a bill called the Hardwicke Estate Bill was coming on for third reading, and, looking at it, he saw it consisted of fifty-two pages, and

that it dealt very summarily with certain properties. It had come from the House of Lords without discussion, and he thought the Commons should be told something about it. Accordingly he spoke to Mr. Dillwyn on the subject, and the two agreed to insist upon an adjournment of the bill until an explanation should have been made.

Accordingly, when the clerk at the table read the title of the bill and the Speaker put the third reading, Mr. Labouchere rose and spoke in the sense indicated. On sitting down, he looked for Mr. Dillwyn to second the amendment, but no Mr. Dillwyn was there. He had fled, and no one rising, the bill went through. On meeting Mr. Dillwyn the next day, Mr. Labouchere asked for an explanation, when it proved that quite unwittingly the former had actually moved the third reading himself! The bills were being hurried through, when the clerk, taking up the next in order, asked Mr. Dillwyn to move it. He was amazed to find the next minute from Mr. Labouchere's speech that he had helped to pass the very measure he wished to oppose. Fearing that Mr. Labouchere had seen him, and would, in revenge, call upon him to explain and defend the fifty-two pages in detail, he hastily hurried behind the Speaker's chair and darted out of the House.

The incident tends to show how little importance Parliament attaches to bills sometimes affecting hundreds of thousands or even millions of pounds, where party feelings are not brought in play. The press perhaps are partly to blame for such a state of things, for quiet, humdrum legislation will not provide matter for telling headings. The eccen-

tricities of individual members of Parliament make far more readable matter.

And what a wonderful variety of character one sees in the House of Commons! It is truly a representative body in the sense that it contains all sorts and conditions of men. The Irish members are often a source of delight. That they do not stand alone in making bulls is certain, but their reputation in this form of unconscious paradox has not been earned for nothing. The late Lord Russell of Killowen, then Sir Charles Russell, for all his keen intellect, once declared that if a Coercion Bill became law no Irishman would be able to speak upon politics "unless he was born deaf and dumb." Another prominent Irish member, still living, said that the rejection of a certain measure would be the destruction of "the only bridge that separated the two countries," meaning England and Ireland; and the late Mr. Mitchell Henry startled the House one night in 1881 by talking of "reaping a crop of turnips."

There are men of all sorts, it has been said, in Parliament. One characteristic, however, is common to nearly all the members. They are never tired of discussing the business of legislation. To a man who is not in the House, and who only takes a moderate interest in politics, the talk about the prospects of this or that measure, the chances of this or that election, the effect of this or that speech upon voters, is apt to become a weariness to the flesh. The M.P. is a little spoiled, and to "talk shop," as it is expressively called in the colloquial language of the day, is a subtle form of egotism. From the moment he is able to put the two magic letters after his name, the world is

changed for him. His presence is sought ; in his mouth commonplaces are significant.

Yet it need hardly be pointed out that to be elected a member of Parliament does not necessarily point to intellectual superiority. Shortly after the Burmese war, a young civilian home on leave, happened to mention Burma. "Ah yes, Burma," said an M.P., with whom he was sitting at table ; "I had a nephew who was in Burma, only he always used to call it Bermuda." On another occasion in March 1885, some one said to Mr. Livesey, "This is a cruel east wind." "Yes," was the witty reply ; "I expect it will be Easter before it is over." This was repeated by Robinson to a respected member of Parliament, who observed gravely : "I expect he's right. I have known it last till Easter and longer yet." There is no foundation for the supposition that the Scots are lacking in the sense of humour. Dean Ramsay's *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character* would alone suffice to refute it. At the same time, candour compels the admission that the member in question was a Scotsman.

## CHAPTER V

The House of Lords—Peers and their dress—Elections and electioneering—Anecdotes—A modern Duchess of Devonshire—The art of political oratory—Voting under a flag of truce—Political meteorology.

THE House of Lords has changed far less than the House of Commons in the course of the last fifty years. The rules of debate, which by the way are exceedingly lax, have not been revolutionised as they have down below, and the proceedings in this august assembly are of a wondrously unexciting kind, so that occupants of the Strangers' Galleries, and even of the Members' benches, may not unfrequently be seen enjoying sweet slumber. Nothing can be more refreshing than a nap while a noble Earl is droning to a weary circle in a room heavy with architectural splendours, but hopelessly unfitted for the purpose for which it was intended. The best of speakers, that is, those whose utterance is loudest and clearest, are heard with difficulty at a little distance, and others, including men who have occupied responsible positions in different governments, have been often absolutely inaudible, at all events in the Reporters' Gallery.

In an ordinary room or hall the late Lord Granville could be heard with ease, but so difficult was it at times to catch even the drift of his utter-

ances in the Lords, that the reports of his speeches as published in the newspapers, unless he happened to send up a manuscript copy to the reporters, as he sometimes did, bore testimony chiefly to the ingenuity of those who concocted them. While he was Foreign Secretary he had to make a very important statement on one occasion on Eastern affairs, and the reporters were on the alert to give his words as fully as possible. The noble Earl stood for five minutes or more apparently addressing the Lord Chancellor, but not a syllable was wafted up above. Then, turning suddenly, as though addressing the Reporters' Gallery, he said, so that he could just be heard : " But such, my Lords, is not the case."

In the House of Commons the same defect does not exist, chiefly owing to the system of lighting. How this happens is in this way. The House of Commons has an excellent system of illumination, the light coming through a glass roof, so that any fumes and a great part of the heat are excluded from the interior of the chamber. In order to form this great glass screen a second roof had to be made below the original one, and the result was a great improvement in the acoustic properties of the House. This, at all events, is the theory held by many. That Barry's Houses of Parliament are ill adapted to the purposes for which they were intended is notorious, however much the exterior may be an ornament to the banks of the Thames. To begin with, it is built of such soft stone that a large sum of money has to be voted every year for the work of repairing the ravages of our climate.

Even the ornamental gilded work in the House of Lords is or was brittle and dangerously loose.

A few years after he first began to attend the sittings of the Houses, Robinson was the eye-witness of an occurrence that plainly indicates this. One Friday evening he saw a Member of the House of Commons, who was sitting in one of the upstairs galleries, touch a piece of the edge of the structure with his foot, and suddenly a heavy piece of work, as big as a dinner plate, fell on to a bench below, which was then happily unoccupied, but on which a lady had been seated a quarter of an hour before. The incident sadly ruffled their lordships' serenity, and it was some time before business was resumed.

On important occasions, which however means very rarely, the House of Lords affords a far more striking scene than the House of Commons. Apart from the fact that there is more ornamentation, there is the presence of ladies, peeresses and their daughters, in the long side galleries, and then there is the bench of Bishops, the occupants of which wear white lawn sleeves blown out apparently by the wind.

In the breast of one man at least who took notes of the proceedings of the House in the 'fifties and 'sixties, the Upper House did not inspire any great respect. It was not that a large proportion of members were so slovenly in their attire, although this was one of the first things he could not help noticing. Strangers would sometimes come who had a recollection of West's picture of the dying Chatham, and who in a dim sort of way rather expected to see the peers in their ceremonial robes. Instead of that they saw perhaps the worst-dressed members of the cloth-wearing community. Men whose broad acres and splendid streams were, as they are now, the admira-

tion of travellers, attended in their places in the House of Lords in the garb of broken-down clerks. The rich colours of the chamber doubtless had something to do with the effect produced, but the plainness of the clothing affected by noble lords was almost equally conspicuous in the streets. Lord Houghton, peer and poet, to mention one instance only out of many, used to wear a suit for which no Jew slop-seller would have given five shillings.

No, it was not merely their clothing that unfavourably impressed the observer. It was the fact that in his estimate the Upper House was the very caricature of a legislative assembly. The average number of peers present in those days, whatever it may be now, was about a dozen, old men mostly, and the majority related to each other by matrimonial connections. Some of the bishops came sometimes, but, save in tradition, not one of them was ever known to stay over the dinner hour.

Closely associated with the subject of Parliament is that of elections, of which journalists have opportunities of seeing and hearing a good deal. In these days of the ballot, political contests are comparatively uneventful, yet every General Election brings with it a crop of anecdotes more or less amusing, which are repeated at the political clubs and after a time are forgotten.

It must have been while open voting was still the rule, when the free and independent voter who went to record his vote had practical experience of the fact that it is sometimes impossible to please everybody, and was often pelted with ochre or rotten eggs by a band representing one or other of the contending parties, that a past-master in the art of political corruption went down to a certain borough



with a large sum of money in gold in his pocket for the furtherance of the interests of one of the rival candidates. In the parlour of the principal inn he met a select body of electors of the sort known to be ready for a bargain. "I have to inform you, gentlemen," he said, "that there is to be no bribery on our side in this election." ("Hear, hear!" from the free and independent ones, accompanied by a chuckle.) "For my part, I do not intend to give away one penny piece." (Awful silence and consternation; this was beyond a joke.) "However," he added, "I'm sadly afraid there are some d—d rascals in the room, and that presently they will put me on the table and take 500 sovereigns out of my pocket." The speaker, it need hardly be said, was on the table in a trice, and his pockets were relieved as he had feared they would be.

Far subtler are the ways now adopted. Subscriptions to local cricket clubs, to antediluvian buffalo and other societies, to concerts and entertainments, and innumerable other local institutions, are probably not without effect. But even now, as in the old days, probably one of the most effective methods of obtaining votes is to secure a number of pretty women to go round amongst the electors, as did the Duchess of Devonshire in the Westminster election, when she bestowed her historic kiss on the butcher. During the General Election of 1885 the beautiful Lady Randolph Churchill went canvassing in the interest of a gentleman whose wife, say Lady Smith, was by no means in the first flush of her youth. Lady Randolph was interviewing a man who appeared to be somewhat of a waverer, and therefore an important person, since

it is often the waverers who decide the event of an election. "I hope," she said, "that you will support the constitutional cause and vote for the Queen and the Tory party." "Well," said the man, "I haven't made up my mind yet, but if I could get the same price" (this was said very knowingly) "as was paid once by the Duchess of Devonshire for a vote, I think I could promise." "Thank you very much," said the fair canvasser sweetly; "I'll let Lady Smith know."

It was at an earlier election, that of 1880, that Mr Gladstone, as the politicians say, swept the country. The Conservatives, it is well known, were particularly unlucky in Scotland on that occasion. Soon after the results became known, two grave, thoughtful-looking Scots were discussing the situation. "I think," said one, "that a' the Tory members for Scotland will be able tae gang up tae London in a first-class compartment." "Ay," said the other, after carefully turning it over in his mind, "and be able to pit their feet upon the seat tae." For another Scotch joke current at the time a barber at Dundee was responsible. He caused a placard to be affixed to his shop informing all whom it might concern that whereas he, the said barber, had been accustomed to shave all comers at a uniform rate of one penny, he now found it necessary to charge the Tories threepence, "on account of their long faces when reading the morning's election news."

The art of political oratory, it may be presumed, is a difficult one, since so few men possess it in any marked degree. Yet real eloquence can very well be dispensed with. What is wanted is the faculty of amusing and interesting an audience, as well as

a certain fluency and readiness of allusion. How useful at times is a metaphor, and how few people can distinguish between it and an argument ! One Liberal speaker in 1886, referring to Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, said : " Some one complained to me the other day that Mr. Gladstone is always trying some nostrum or other for Ireland ; now the Irish Church, then a Land Bill, and so on. Why couldn't he leave it alone ? ' You remind me,' I replied, ' of the miser and his horse. The miser found his animal, once a fine, spirited creature, getting thinner and thinner, until his ribs resembled a toast-rack. " I've tried," he said, " chopped straw, I've tried sawdust, and charcoal, and acorns, and all sorts of things, but all to no purpose." Whereupon some one said to him : " Try oats, my friend, try oats." ' And that is what Mr. Gladstone wants to do with Ireland. In his bill for Irish self-government he is trying oats." This lively sally was received with terrific cheering. Now the speaker may have been perfectly right in his contention as to the efficacy of Home Rule, a subject that lies outside the scope of the present pages, yet it is evident that his argument from analogy was no argument at all. Another speaker would have had just as good a right to assume that a Home Rule Bill was as fairly to be likened to arsenic or any other deleterious substance as to good nourishing food. But that way lies success upon the platform.

Repartee, too, is extremely useful. One of the best things of the kind was said by the Duke of Leeds, then Lord Carmarthen, when he put up for Brixton. He happened to be a very youthful-looking candidate, and a rude man called out to

him at an open-air meeting, held the day before the poll : "Does your mother know you are out ?" "No," was the reply, "but she will know I am in to-morrow." Few speakers are so ready. Some men indeed get into Parliament, as is well known, who cannot say a dozen coherent words in public. One of these, a well-known brewer, who was wooing a county constituency, was endeavouring to set forth his views on the political situation at a public meeting. He became very embarrassed, and hesitated repeatedly. At last a voice from the crowded gallery exclaimed : "Take out the vent-peg, old man !" Another unhappy man had a difficulty under similar circumstances in unbosoming himself. A friend tried to help him by explaining what were his claims upon the attention of the audience. "I do not think," said the friend, "that you know who Mr. — is. His father was Baron —." Here a voice interrupted the speaker with : "It's a pity his *mother* wasn't."

It must have been at a meeting where there was some more attractive speaker than either of the two last named candidates that the crush was very great and people were nearly fainting. It had been convened in support of Mr. Gladstone. Suddenly, in the midst of the proceedings, a man at the back of the hall called out : "What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1868 ?" Of course there were the usual cries of "Order," "Turn him out," and so forth. "I repeat," said the man sternly, "What did Mr. Gladstone say in 1868 ?" There was a great commotion, and the chairman, who prided himself upon his notions of fair play, said : "If the gentleman has anything to say let him come on the platform. We will not deny him a

hearing." Accordingly way was made with some difficulty for the interrupter, and he proceeded to the platform. "And now, sir," said the chairman, "what have you to say about Mr. Gladstone's policy in 1868?" "Oh, I, nothing at all," said the strange man, "only I was suffocating where I was, and I could not get out"; and he beat a hasty retreat through the platform door.

In Ireland, it is well known, election contests are apt to be even keener than they are in England, and often the votes are polled even to the last man. A curious illustration of this is afforded by an election in which Mr. Vesey Knox, the young Protestant Nationalist, headed the poll in 1895. Mr. Knox had the good fortune to be returned for two places, in one case without a contest; and, as that was the year in which so many Liberals lost their seats, and his recommendation of a substitute for whichever seat he did not intend to occupy was supposed to be of value, he found his popularity all of a sudden vastly increased. That, however, is by the way.

The story connected with the contested election is this: A voter had run away with another man's wife, and her husband had vowed he would shoot the seducer. But husband and seducer were alike Nationalists in politics, and the local leaders said: "Now, Patrick" (his name was not Patrick), "you know we want every vote. Murphy" (the seducer) "will come if you swear not to injure him, and give him twenty-four hours' start." The husband yielded, and gave the promise. The man went over to Ireland and voted, and returned immediately afterwards to Liverpool or Manchester, or wherever he happened to be living.

Incidentally reference has been made to the Home Rule question and the disastrous defeat of the Liberals in 1895. The success of the Conservatives surprised some of the keenest observers, at all events on the other side, and the reputations of more than one political prophet were shattered. "Make a note of what I say," said a certain Liberal whip to Robinson one day before the pollings began, "and you may quote my words against me if I am wrong. The Liberals are coming back with an increased majority." Of course the one who took the note had not the heart to do as he had been told, but the incident may well be recorded here by way of warning to others. Of all meteorologies political meteorology seems the most uncertain, which is not saying a little.

One disadvantage the Conservatives had at that period of their greatest prosperity, and it was quite unforeseen. The terms Union and Unionist are well known now, but were not then so generally understood. More than one candidate who denounced Home Rule from the platform, and spoke of the "maintenance of the Union," found that his words fell rather flat. Certain of the listeners were under the impression that what was meant was the maintenance of the workhouse.

## CHAPTER VI

Battles of the giants—Gladstone and Disraeli: a contrast—Gladstone's ascendancy over the Commons—His defects—Disraeli—One of the last of the dandies—His style of oratory—His Judaism—Anecdotes.

THE observer in Parliament during the period dealt with in these desultory memoirs, that is to say, the twenty-two years that elapsed from 1852 to the defeat of the Liberal ministry in 1874, witnessed many historic scenes. It was the era of the great rivalry between Gladstone and Disraeli. Never was there a greater contrast between two great leaders, a fact which brings out in a curious way how dissimilar are the qualities that may enable men to attain to the highest honours in Parliamentary life. Gladstone, from first to last, had all the earnestness, the fire, the enthusiasm of youth; Disraeli, in his Parliamentary days, was cold, impassive, mocking, cynical. Little arts Gladstone despised; Disraeli cultivated them with assiduity. From being the rising hope, as Macaulay said, of the stern and unbending Tories who mutinously followed Sir Robert Peel, Gladstone came, by slow but unmistakable stages, to a firm conviction in Liberal principles; Disraeli, travelling in a precisely opposite direction, was transformed without the slightest premonitory warning

from a Radical into an out-and-out defender of Church and Constitution.

In their very way of entering the House there was a marked difference, Gladstone usually walking in with rapid step from behind the Speaker's chair, and almost bouncing into his seat close by; Disraeli strolling in in slow and leisurely fashion from the opposite door, the one farthest from the place in which he sat. Gladstone trusted to the inspiration of the moment; Disraeli carefully elaborated his speeches beforehand. Gladstone, considering his extraordinary debating talents, can hardly be considered to have shone in epigram or repartee; epigram and repartee were Disraeli's most effective weapons. The points of contrast might be multiplied almost indefinitely. As regards Disraeli's careful preparation of his speeches, Lord Granville told a story full of significance. He was once talking to Disraeli about Plunket, the famous orator, and how he had heard him once when he seemed to be about to break down in the course of an important speech as though seeking for a word to express his meaning. "Lord bless you," was Mr. Disraeli's comment, "did that take you in? Why, that is part of the trick. I have often done it to make it appear that a speech has not been prepared."

The period of the Reform Bill debates in the House of Commons in 1866 and 1867 may be considered that in which the rivalry between the two great Parliamentarians reached its climax. In those days Gladstone was a tall, slightly made man, with pale face, sharp, classical features, and piercing eyes, across whose countenance, as he spoke, were constantly fleeting shades of expression.



Frequently he would take up a piece of writing paper and refer to it for some fact or figure which he would proceed to make eloquent by his polished phrases, his happy turns of thought, his variations of intonation. There were in his voice fine deep impressive notes reminding one somehow of the effect produced by a church organ. Unlike many speakers, even of those who had had much experience, he never fixed his eyes upon any particular part of his audience to address only them. He would speak all round. At one moment he was persuasively addressing his opponents opposite ; at the next speaking in a deprecating tone to censorious supporters behind him ; or, again, he would give encouragement to his admirers farther down.

He had very little action. With his right forefinger he would emphasise certain statements, and occasionally his hand would fall sharply on the table in front of him ; sometimes he would drop both hands at his sides, or for a second or two fold his arms, but whatever the movement, it was always in harmony with the spirit of his words, and often gave them increased effect. As an orator he was not "that faultless monster the world ne'er saw." Persons who listened to him for the first time not unfrequently felt apprehensive. It seemed impossible that a speaker who hurried into such mazes of words could extricate himself with safety—that is, grammatically.

The more intricate Gladstone was, the greater the need of caution. He would half rouse the most startling fears, and then, by a sheer plenitude of words, allay them. "Good heavens ! what is he going to say now ?" one asked one's self, as he began to speak of the exceptions to the rights of

the whole, and Lord Salisbury's sneer about his coming down to the House and addressing it in "his most ecclesiastical manner," is well remembered.

One of his most praiseworthy characteristics, his zeal for the welfare of the working classes, made him a shaft for ridicule even from men professing Liberal principles. Mr. Lowe, afterwards Lord Sherbrooke, who was one of the Trustees of the British Museum at the time when the proposal to throw open that institution on Sundays was first mooted in Parliament, was discussing Gladstone's attitude with regard to the question. "I didn't know Gladstone's opinion," he said, "but he was aware the Trustees were against it, and so I assumed it was all right. But when Mr. — began to drop his h's in the debate, and say, 'he 'oped the 'ouse would not be in a 'urry,' I trembled. I saw Gladstone sit up and listen eagerly, and I felt sure he'd give way and agree to the proposal because it had been advocated in bad English. I am glad to say, though, that he joined me in refusing."

Whatever might be said, however, by friend or foe, few statesmen have ever been more capable of inspiring awe and respect. His colleagues in the Cabinet, when he was at the head of the Government, would sit a little way from him. It seemed as though they thought it would have been sacrilege to touch his coat. Just after the war broke out between France and Germany in 1870, there was an important discussion on European affairs in the House of Lords, and Mr. Gladstone, coming in, was accommodated with a seat on the steps of the throne. A group of Members of the House of Commons, who were in front of him,

instantly formed a sort of lane so that nothing should intercept his view, and it was curious to observe how these men, belonging to both great parties, would glance back nervously from time to time to make sure they were not in the way.

So much for Gladstone in his public character. To sum up Disraeli is by no means so easy. As regards his religion, his politics, his opinions on any question save one (the emancipation of the Jews) who is there that can speak with confidence? Among men of all parties and creeds there was ever a feeling of suspicion as to the sincerity of most of his public utterances. "I happened to know four or five of his schoolfellows," Robinson notes, "boys who were with him for some years at a boarding-school in Essex kept by a learned Unitarian minister, the Rev. E. Cogan, and they all to this day (this was written in 1867) vow and declare that he is a Liberal." Meeting one of these old schoolfellows in the same year, Disraeli asked him whether he remembered their old master, and spoke of him in terms that would probably have shocked some of the bishops and archbishops who gave their blessing to the party led by him—the party, that is to say, that was resolutely fighting just then to maintain the privileges of the Irish Church.

In the battle of the Conservative Reform Bill the burden of the work fell upon Disraeli, and he displayed profound generalship. His great difficulty lay in the fact that having "caught the Whigs bathing" and appropriated their clothes, he had to try to pretend he had not got them on. It was a very different position from that which he had occupied in the previous year, when Mr. Gladstone's Bill had been brought forward. Then

Mr. Gladstone had many mutinous followers, opponents secret or avowed, of proposals to extend the franchise. Whoever attacked Mr. Gladstone's Bill was sure of the applause of all the Conservatives and of a great many Liberals. Every joke against it, however feeble, was cheered as though it had been a pearl of price, the commonplace was voted eloquent, and the eloquent sublime.

Disraeli was a sphinx, a human riddle. He wrapped himself in an impenetrable veil. There he sat on the green benches, night after night, facing his doughty opponent. His coat was closely buttoned, his arms crossed, and his head slightly bent. The face, of a strong Jewish cast, was deadness itself. To satire, to ridicule, to fierce invective he appeared as impervious as any of the statues of statesmen that ornament Parliament Square outside. His frock coat was a perfect fit, whereas his rival would sometimes go about looking positively seedy, for all the world like a peer of the realm. Disraeli's neckerchief was always tied with studied negligence, and a black curl was carefully plastered down the forehead. He was one of the last of the dandies—of the men of the D'Orsay school—and he never forgot it. An eminent Royal Academician averred that towards the end of his life, that is to say, in 1878, Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield, was attended by a certain hairdresser (the Royal Academician's own man) every evening when in town, which was three times a week, and that his two or three locks, and the imperial on his chin, were gummed and dyed, after which a handkerchief was tied over his cranium in the shape of a turban, and in this state he retired to rest.

In his House of Commons days, when his sup-

porters cheered him, he would look into vacuity, as some preachers do when they know that every eye is upon them. He would neither smile nor frown nor look inquiringly. When he spoke it was always with excessive deference to the House. He once said that Sir Robert Peel was the greatest "Member of Parliament," not, be it observed, the greatest statesmen of his age, and this was what he himself aspired to become. His study was men, not principles, and he made capital out of their foibles or their prejudices.

As an orator his voice was powerful and melodious, and when he was at his best his speeches cut his antagonists to the very quick. Their graphic terseness, sharp antitheses, stinging irony, and power of climax, almost made one overlook the rather artificial accents and theatrical manner. Whether from nervousness or mere habit, he could not dispose of his hands satisfactorily to himself while speaking. He would put one hand in his breast, then a second afterwards it was fiddling at his coat-tails behind. Sometimes his hands were on his hips ; at others they were on the table before him. Frequently a white handkerchief was pulled out of the pocket and put back again. When letting off one of those clever phrases upon which he relied for effect, he almost invariably thrust both hands into his coat-tail pockets and divided his coat with a tight grasp.

Some telling points were most effectively delivered. Speaking in 1867 of the different Governments that had undertaken to make experiments in Reform, he said : " One was a pure Whig Government, another a Coalition Government, a third a Conservative Government, a fourth a moderate

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Liberal Government." Then he came to the previous session. Here he dropped his voice and said : " In 1866 there was a——," he paused as if seeking for a word, and, failing to find it, added, with mock deference : " There was *a* Government." The men he was quizzing were not least loud in their laughter. His perorations were generally affected in style, and sometimes, when subjected to examination, had no meaning at all. He was most sincere perhaps in his *Home Letters*, and there he said of the House of Commons : " Affectation tells here even better than wit."

Affectation, however, was not better than his rival's eloquence. *Punch* was generally held to have shrewdly summed up the situation after the debate on Danish affairs in 1865, when he represented Disraeli as the beaten schoolboy in the fight, to whom Mrs. Gamp (the *Standard*) says : " Never mind, my dear. You done yer werry best to win; which that Master Gladsting is such a huncommon strong boy." Good observers declared they could see that Disraeli knew he was no match for his rival in a pitched battle, not from his countenance, for that was impenetrable, but from the fact that he avoided a direct personal conflict as much as he possibly could. One of the funniest sights of the Reform Bill debates was the joy of Lord John Russell at Gladstone's triumphs. Lord John was enjoying revenge, as it were, by proxy.

As Prime Minister, Disraeli, from the House of Commons point of view, possessed a hundred virtues. With the swarm of little enemies who pestered him with questions and gave notice of embarrassing motions, he was invariably humorous and tolerant. He never wounded their vanity,

although he would often place them in a ridiculous light, and while giving them little or no information, would appear to be trying to meet their wishes. It is true that in the case of a Prime Minister, as of a judge when sitting in his Court, a little wit always goes a long way. Did a member get up and ask whether it was true that a certain other member was to be made a baronet? Mr. Disraeli, in reply, would insinuate that his questioner was anxious to secure a baronetcy for himself, and the House was convulsed.

It has been said that some of his old school-fellows declared that Disraeli was a Radical. Mr. Bernal Osborne, who like himself came of the Jewish race, and who was very intimate with him to the end of his life, was of the same opinion. Osborne averred that he was no conversationalist; that his conversation, in fact, was "epigrams without the epigram"; but then the man who said this was always ready to sacrifice a friend to a smart saying. The same authority said in conversation on November 17, 1880, that the evening before he had dined at M. Alfred de Rothschild's with Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield), Lord Hartington, Lord Odo Russell, Lord Dufferin, and Mr. W. E. Forster, a rather odd assemblage. During dinner the state of Europe was freely discussed, and Disraeli expressed his belief that France had no prospect of recovering her place in Europe. On the following night, Osborne was going with him to (of all places) Hengler's Circus!

Disraeli's unselfish devotion to the race that gave him birth is too well known to need dwelling on. That he was, while not openly professing the Jewish faith, a Jew at heart, there can be little

doubt. A speaker at the Church Congress in 1882 mentioned that he had once asked him whether he considered himself a Christian or a Jew. After a moment's pause the great man said: "I am a developed Jew." Readers of his *Life of Lord George Bentinck* may remember the passage: "If the Jews had not prevailed upon the Romans to crucify Our Lord, what would have become of the Atonement? The immolators were pre-ordained like the victim, and the holy race supplied both. Could that be a crime which secured for all mankind eternal joy?" According to an influential member of the Jewish community, Lord Beaconsfield on his death-bed sent for a Rabbi and made a declaration of faith in the Jewish form.

To return to his rivalry with Gladstone, with which this chapter chiefly deals, it may be mentioned that the antipathy of the two men extended, as is not always, or even usually the case under such circumstances, to their private life. At the opening of the Exhibition of 1862 they met, and stood talking for some time in the same group. It was noticed that they studiously turned their backs to each other. Mr. Gladstone's eulogy on his great rival after the decease of the latter probably cost him more effort than any other of his oratorical performances, and it was one of the least successful.



## CHAPTER VII

Men in Parliament—The last of the Whigs—"Pam"—The Free Traders : Cobden, Bright, Villiers—Lowe's Reform speeches—John Stuart Mill—Father and son : a study in contrasts—Lord John Manners—Lord Robert Cecil.

IN order fully to realise the ability which secured for a Gladstone and a Disraeli so commanding a position, it is necessary to bear in mind that there were other giants in the House of Commons in their day, with whom they came into competition. Rarely has there been such a galaxy of stars in the Parliamentary firmament as there was in the earlier part of the second half of the nineteenth century. The admission does not necessarily imply that those theorists are right who contend that the extension of the suffrage has had debasing effect upon the representative Chamber, for no one probably would venture to maintain that all the dolts and bores are sent to the House of Commons by working-class constituencies, and all the men of sense and education by more aristocratic regions. The fact, however, is patent, let it be explained how it may.

Let us conjure up out of the past a few of the notable figures whose place knows them no more. First and foremost there is little Lord John Russell, by many called "Lord John," or

"Johnny Russell." Millions of portraits and caricatures have made the world familiar with the diminutive little man who played a distinguished part for so many years in our public affairs. We catch glimpses of him as he wanders about the House, restless and fidgety, with his broad-brimmed Quaker-like tall hat pressed over his temples, as though Lord Palmerston, his *bête noire* on the Liberal side, had in a jocular moment bonneted him. His day, however, is almost gone. Soon he will be in the House of Lords, where he will enjoy one more short and precarious term of power. He is about to become the last of the Whigs, and already, before he leaves the Commons, he seems to be looking about him in quest of a genuine surviving specimen of that historic race.

There was a period, and that not very long ago, when he was the haughty leader of a faithful and united party. His word, to a large section of his fellow-countrymen, was law. They received his counsel as that of a master. With his diminutive figure dilating with importance, he would stand at the table in front of the Speaker and administer a stern rebuke to a recalcitrant follower, or deliver a tremendous philippic against an open antagonist. A numerous mass of obedient Whigs would gaze at him with reverence, and their cries of "Hear, hear!" came with as regular a unanimity as the applause of the boys in the upper gallery at the Westminster play. His voice was monotonous, mincing, and hard, his manner cold, his person insignificant, but in his best days there was a dignity about him that was quite independent of the fact that he happened to be a lord. He had a knack, too, of saying sharp

things which told in debate and made him feared by his opponents.

So long had been his tenure of power at one time, that he was encouraged in the delusion that his premiership was necessary to the country. On the slightest pretext he would resign, till at last it was seen that no sacrifice need be made in order to bring him back, and Palmerston shot by him to the front. The old Whigs, like Lord Lansdowne (Dr. Priestley's pupil) transferred their allegiance to the sunny-tempered, genial Viscount, and Russell's ascendancy was a thing of the past. Most of his political support in the country came from the dissenters, yet these men he neglected no opportunity of snubbing. He was so proud in his demeanour that a Liberal member of the House of Commons would approach him with all the deferential airs of a lackey. It is probable that he had shaken hands with fewer people than any public man of his years. His great glory lay in having secured the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. After that achievement his power of initiative seemed to desert him. His doubts and hesitations, his right-about changes on the subject of Reform, convinced people that he had lost all statesmanlike grasp.

As an administrator he had great gifts, and occasionally he would come out as an orator, delivering himself of sentences that Mr. Bright might have coveted, although his speeches were marred by the unsympathetic quality of his voice. Whenever he folded his arms and clasped them tightly, one might feel quite sure that he had something fiery to say. Then he would unlock his arms and descend to a much lower level

of oratory. He was one of the oddest-looking little men ever seen, especially in old age, when he sat in the Lords. His clothes were ill-fitting, his head was large and round, and appeared to be fast embedded between his shoulders, as though he had no neck.

Lord John's great rival, Lord Palmerston, shared with Disraeli the reputation of being, like the man of Goldsmith's abhorrence, "a zealot for nothing." Palmerston despised enthusiasm and detested enthusiasts. He was a Parliamentary strategist and nothing more. Often when he got up to speak no one could have guessed to what opinions he was going to give utterance, and at times they were no wiser when he had got half-way through his discourse. The plate was kept spinning in the air with such dexterity, sometimes one side being visible and sometimes the other, that lookers-on began to wonder whether the judicious performer had really made up his mind, or whether he was not considering the pros and cons as he went along.

Palmerston invariably amused the House, and he was essentially and typically an average Englishman appealing to average Englishmen. His repartees were effective, although they hardly bear scrutiny. On one occasion some members interrupted him as he spoke with cries of "No, no!" "Mr. Speaker," said Palmerston, "I am not to be led by the noes." The retort, of course, bore not the least resemblance of argument, but the protesters laughed and were therefore disarmed. A good instance of his method is afforded by an anecdote told by Mr. Gladstone. One evening the House had discussed a bill or resolution very

fully, a division was taken and the question, to all appearance, was disposed of. Nearly every representative man, save Disraeli, had spoken. Three nights later, when some other question was being debated, Disraeli returned to the old topic and spoke for some time upon it.

In reply Palmerston said: “The right honourable gentleman has surprised the House by a speech upon a subject already fully debated, and, as we thought, settled for the session. The right honourable gentleman reminds me of a worthy militiaman in my county who had to take part in a review. As is usual on such occasions, there was a good deal of firing, a good deal of gunpowder and noise; everybody was pleased, and every one, save our friend, discharged his gun. At length the regiment was disbanded and the various members departed to their homes. Our friend, on approaching his native village, saw some old women in red cloaks, and instantly remembered that he had not fired off his gun. Putting his weapon to his shoulder, and pointing it to the sky, he pulled the trigger, and, to the consternation of the old women, discharged it in the air. So the right honourable gentleman to-night——” Shouts of laughter prevented the conclusion from being heard.

Of Mr. Cobden our observer caught just a few glimpses, and like others was captivated by his calm, dispassionate, cogent reasoning, before that statesman was removed from the scene of his labours in the prime of life. But Cobden’s great friend and colleague, John Bright, remained. Honourable members who detested Bright’s principles were moved in spite of themselves by

the magic which belongs to splendid eloquence allied with a rigid adherence to principle. When it was known that he was "up," the buzz in the crowded chamber ceased as though every one present had been struck dumb, and from lobbies and ante-rooms members hurried as if a division, on which the fate of a party depended, was about to take place. Usually the orator would begin in a subdued tone, but as he warmed to his subject his voice, into which he contrived to put exquisite modulations, rang out loud and clear.

The power of that voice indeed was one of the most remarkable things about the man. He dignified the commonplace: as witness the effect of his recital of a list of most plebeian-sounding names of women emancipators in America at the Lloyd Garrison breakfast; and he gave fresh meanings to familiar texts of Scripture. Although it is generally supposed that he was a teetotaller, this was not, strictly speaking, the case. In March 1885 he declared that he had only drunk "one glass of wine during the past fourteen years." Like another well-known notable temperance advocate, he could tell a good story and was very happy and ready as a rule with a retort. Before the Select Committee on Capital Punishment in 1867, the chaplain of Newgate Gaol said emphatically that he believed it was contrary to the direct teaching of the Bible, and therefore morally wrong, to visit the killing of a human being with any punishment but death. "Then," said Bright, "you consider that Her Majesty the Queen, who has remitted the capital sentence in seventy-five cases since her accession to the throne, has in each instance violated the teaching of Scripture and com-

mitted a moral offence?" The poor chaplain was dumbfounded, and at length could only stammer out a plea that there were exceptions to which his remark did not apply.

Bright's great failing was a certain harshness, not to say intolerance. He seldom minced words in speaking of acts of which he disapproved. In 1879, when news came of the death of Prince Louis Napoleon in Zululand, some one spoke to him about the event, at the same time expressing horror and indignation at the circumstances connected with the lad's tragic end. "I don't see that," said Bright; "he went out to a foreign country *to amuse himself with murder*, and he has been killed himself. I see nothing else." This saying gave great offence to some of his friends. In his latter days the great orator held rather eccentric views in some ways. He was, for instance, a firm believer in the absurd theory about Bacon having written the plays which the world is content to ascribe to Shakespeare.

The names of Cobden and Bright are in everybody's mouth in connection with the struggle for Free Trade. Comparatively few people ever think of Mr. Villiers' services in the cause, although his annual motion for the repeal of the Corn Laws used to be brought forward with unfailing regularity before Cobden or Bright was ever heard of. Mr. Villiers was a remarkably clever debater, extremely adroit in laying little traps for his opponents. As a rule he did not begin his speeches well. He hummed and hawed, and the unwary who did not know him were tempted into giving expression to an ironical "Hear, hear!" But an instance must be given.

It was one evening in 1852 that Mr. Villiers was addressing the House on his pet subject. After beginning in the manner mentioned, he said, referring to a speech by Mr. Christopher: "I will not allude further to that speech, for it is a long time since it was delivered." "Hear, hear!" murmured the squires. "Some *months*," added Mr. Villiers. Then referring to an amendment by Mr. Disraeli, he said: "I assure the right honourable gentleman that I derive great satisfaction from it." "Hear, hear!" again from the squires. "Not," added the speaker, "that it is an amendment upon my resolution, but upon the *politics of the right honourable gentleman*." Again: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer seems to be entering upon a career of usefulness (Ministerial cheers), and I would entreat him not to be deterred by *the novelty of the thing* from pursuing it; and with his talents (Hear, hear!), which seem to be *available for any purpose*, I should be really sorry to see him removed from office by my motion."

The part played by Mr. Robert Lowe in the Reform debates belongs to history. His wonderfully vigorous speeches against the extension of the suffrage of course derived an added piquancy from the fact that they were delivered from the Liberal benches. It is so easy to draw cheers from one's opponents by playing into their hands! Sir James Graham, Mr. Horsman, Mr. Roebuck, and the late Lord Wemyss, then Lord Elcho, were adepts at the business. Lowe's speeches, however, made their mark quite independently of the circumstances under which they were delivered.



He was a white-haired, white eye-browed, white eye-lashed man. His eyes could not stand the light, and as he contracted his brows, he looked like some wild animal waiting to pounce upon its prey. While predicting the degradation of Parliament and the reign of Socialism as a consequence of the admission of lodgers and the smaller householders to the franchise, he seemed to have caught something of the fanaticism of the maniacs who went crying through the streets of London at the time of the Great Plague. As he talked, his white head swung from side to side like that of a Polar bear at the Zoological Gardens, and his words, like his manner, were almost ferocious. Without any action save the movement mentioned, and with no attempt to vary the tones of his voice, he would, by the sheer force of intellect, drive home his sentences, speaking rapidly and distinctly and with the air of a master.

Disraeli's sneer that Lowe was an "inspired schoolboy," had reference to his inveterate habit of quoting commonplace scraps of Latin. Another saying of Disraeli's that he hated the working classes, the Irish Catholics, the Irish Protestants, Her Majesty's Ministers, in short, everything and everybody, was by no means unprovoked. As one listened to Mr. Lowe one could not help feeling that he had not a particle of respect for his hearers, or, for that matter, for the entire human race. "What fools these mortals be !" seemed to be his motto. Mr. Lowe's unpopularity was one of the many causes of the downfall of Mr. Gladstone's first Administration. Mr. Ayrton was almost equally disliked, but the outcry against him was largely due to the fact that he resolutely refused, when Chief

Commissioner of Works, to let artistic fanatics make raids upon the public purse.

Mr. John Stuart Mill was so little of a party politician that one thinks of him rather as a philosopher than an active legislator. The atmosphere of the House was uncongenial to him. He went little into society ; he rose early and retired early to rest. From his quiet walks and the peaceful haven of his home he was suddenly snatched, and was called upon to herd with men of all sorts—men of business, earnest political workers, political schemers and self-seekers ; to be nightly in their company, to forswear long evenings of thought and study. The habits of a lifetime were reversed. He could not do without his sleep. If unable to reach his bedroom by ten o'clock at night, he must sleep in the Commons. And he did sleep.

Night after night Mill would sit at the end of a bench, his chin sunk upon his breast, or his head moving slowly down and rising after a jerk. "My distinguished friend the honourable member for Westminster," said Mr. Bouverie one night, "says that this bill has not been properly matured. Now, sir, no one respects more than I do the great gifts of my distinguished friend" (every eye turned towards Mr. Mill, who dropped his head a little lower into his waistcoat), "but will he tell me that a measure now three sessions old is hastily conceived ? Does he mean that wisdom always comes with waiting ?" Here, by one of those absurd and irregular motions which sleepers exhibit, Mr. Mill happened slowly to raise his head, and it was thought he was awake at last and was going to listen. But instead of this the

head took a backward turn and he slept more soundly than ever. The House was in convulsions.

As an orator, it is well known Mill was a success, although his liability to pause as if he had lost the thread of his discourse, made his friends painfully apprehensive of a breakdown. This is the more strange as all his speeches were carefully prepared and were communicated to the Press. Gentle and modest in his manner, the philosopher had spirit and self-respect. When he was living at Avignon, he was invited to go to a hotel in that city to meet two princesses, sisters, who were staying there. His answer was that he was compelled to make it a rule not to pay visits of the kind. Upon this a gentleman of the suite called and assured him the princesses had come to Avignon on purpose to see him, as they admired him greatly. Mr. Mill did not see his way to grant the request, and could only say that he would be happy to see them if they would call upon him. The princesses were firm on the matter of etiquette, and consequently their journey to the South of France was unproductive.

Two other prominent personages in Parliament in those days, father and son, offered a piquant contrast. They were Lord Derby and Lord Stanley. The father was full of fire, imperious, impetuous ; the son, afterwards the Lord Derby who separated himself from Lord Beaconsfield on the Eastern Question and thereby handed over the reversion of the Tory leadership to Lord Salisbury, was grave, thoughtful, cautious, statesmanlike. Lord Stanley once remarked : " My father would be a very able man if he knew anything," and Lord Derby, being asked whether he had sent his

translation of the *Iliad* to his son, replied that he was waiting till it should be printed in prose and published in the form of a blue-book. Allowing, of course, for epigrammatic exaggeration, those two sentences accurately describe the two men.

Singular fate of the English Tories! They would have felt unofficered without their Prince Rupert, and yet with him they were led by one who had exhibited nothing so conspicuously as a profound incapacity to read the signs of the times or to form a statesmanlike view of political principles. In 1826 he protested against the Manchester and Liverpool Railway Bill as a "mad and extravagant speculation." In Ireland his administration had been so unpopular as to gain for him the nickname of "Scorpion Stanley," and Shiel spoke of him as "the Secretary *at war* with Ireland." To Protection he clung with something like fury long after Sir Robert Peel had been compelled to abandon it. The union of the Italian States he ridiculed with all the cleverness at his command, and during the great struggle in America his strong class impulses and fastidious personal tastes led him to espouse with vehemence the cause of the South. Had he not been checked by the strong common-sense of his son and the worldly wisdom of Disraeli he would, in 1866, have brought England to the verge of revolution by prohibiting demonstrations in favour of Reform. His strength was in his oratory, which was surpassed by only that of two of his contemporaries.

In appearance Lord Derby was not imposing. At the time of the Reform debates his hair was

grey, and he allowed his whiskers and beard to surround his face in such a way as to give the look of the white frill round the venerable face of the pantaloon. But when he stood up to speak, when the light shot out of his piercing eye, when his fine profile was seen, when the clear, polished, and haughty tones, the torrent of brilliant words, the fine ease and captivating grace seized upon the senses, the listener was compelled to admire. Oh, that marvellous gift of eloquence ! Why is it that men are led by those who are the most spirited declaimers, and who have the finest ear for the music of words ? "All my life," said the late Professor Huxley, "I have had to content myself with saying what I mean in the plainest of plain language, than which no habit is more ruinous to a man's prospect of advancement."

Who knows what Lord Stanley might have accomplished had he inherited his father's talent as an orator ? But Nature was against him. He had wide knowledge, an aptitude for business such as few men of his social position care to acquire, sound judgment, an air of frankness singularly winning. But all his life he had to struggle against defects of utterance that made his speeches scarcely intelligible in the House of Commons and practically inaudible in the House of Lords. His voice had a thick heavy sound, as though a hand were clutched at his throat. Seldom do the highest rewards fall to the man who is thus handicapped.

Two other members who were somewhat similarly afflicted were Bulwer Lytton and Lord John Manners—dear old Lord John, who clung to the last to his early beliefs in the Church and cricket,

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with the maypole on the village green as the cure for all the country's ills !

Lord Robert Cecil, afterwards Lord Cranborne but best remembered as Lord Salisbury, was a statesman who hardly did himself justice in the House of Commons. Mr. Bernal Osborne, who knew him well, declared that he was the most amiable of men, and many others who have had a like opportunity of judging have borne the same testimony. But in the House his manner at times was, to speak it plainly, offensive. He would laugh heartily when a speaker whom he disliked was at his best sentences, and nudge a neighbour by the elbow when everybody else was straining to hear what was being said. In the middle 'sixties he had dark, rather long hair, and a thick black beard. Usually he wore a black cloth suit, for which no clothesman would have given half a sovereign ; and one of those men who used to go about seeking to exchange pots of flowers for cast-off wearing apparel would not have offered even a primrose root for his hat.

Narrow in that he had little sympathy, politically speaking, for any class but that from which he had sprung, no one could doubt the perfect sincerity and honesty of Lord Salisbury's nature. His famous attacks upon Disraeli, his denunciations of the "ethics of the adventurer," and the "policy of legerdemain," were dictated by sincere indignation at the attempt to keep a party in power by methods diametrically opposed to its most cherished principles. Later, as all the world knows, he joined Disraeli in his Imperialistic policy, but his speech on the Indian forward policy, when he spoke of "large maps," and other public utterances

of his, were significant of the state of his mind on the subject of England's foreign relations. One of the most distinguished statesmen among his opponents was wont to speak of his ardent love of peace.

## CHAPTER VIII

Another Parliamentary group—Lord Lytton—The Duke of Argyll—Lord Shaftesbury—A few members of the old school: Mr. Henley, Mr. Baring, Mr. Newdegate—Sir John Bowring—Dashing Tom Duncombe—Mr. Bernal Osborne—Colonel Sibthorp—Mr. Beresford Hope—Professor Fawcett—Eccentrics.

THE author of *Pelham*, after he joined the Tories and became a landed proprietor, only spoke at rare intervals. His speeches were always reported verbatim in the Press, and as they abounded in happy illustrations and had two or three good stories in each, while the substance was smooth and polished, he obtained outside Parliament the reputation of an orator. How the reporters contrived to set down what he said was a mystery. It was pitiable to hear the hollow, rasping sounds and the thick lisp, while the pompous wave of the arms, as though he was despatching his sentences to the four quarters of the earth, added to the absurdity.

In *What will he do with it?* Lytton has a character named George Morley, who is represented as a gentleman of fine abilities and attainments, debarred by a defective utterance from entering upon a profession that is dear to him. One day, standing by a river, he tries the Demosthenic cure, and after half an hour's experimenting,



seized with shame at the impotence of his exertions, he flings away the pebbles and, sinking on the ground, weeps like a baffled child. A friend named Misty discovers a cure, and his description of it is not remotely suggestive of his name. So far as can be gathered, it consists in smoking a pipe and speaking between each puff. If the author ever tried this himself, the result, it was only too evident, was a lamentable failure. Yet if literary flavour, epigrammatic completeness, and pointed antithesis constituted good speaking, Lytton would have been in the front rank of orators. A speech which he delivered during the debates of 1859 was declared by Mr. Sidney Herbert to be one of the finest he had ever heard in his life. The remark had reference of course to the matter, not the manner.

One important gift Lytton had, and that was readiness, some of his most striking effects being evidently unpremeditated. In the speech to which reference has just been made, he said: "Into whose hands will the Government pass? Noble lords and gentlemen who are at this moment so carefully bridging the gangway with a rope of sand"—here there was loud laughter, for the House noted that the orator's eye had just lighted on the figure of Sir W. G. Hayter sitting sure enough *in* the gangway, the connecting link.

The Duke of Argyll, who would sometimes bring with him to the House his son, the present Duke (Princess Louise's husband), then a boy, was an orator of distinction. At the Lloyd Garrison breakfast he managed to acquit himself well, even though he had to follow Bright, who delivered himself of one of his finest efforts on that occasion.

The Duke had a pale, rather effeminate face, and, like a true Scot, sandy hair. He was an excellent man, with sterling qualities of head and heart, even though some who saw him thought he seemed rather too well satisfied with the gifts Nature had bestowed upon him. He would sit well forward in his seat, pass his hands through his long, flowing hair, and thrust it back so as to lay bare his long forehead; and, oh, how severe and intellectual he looked! When well past middle age he still seemed to suggest somehow by his manner the "intellectual young man" of mechanics' institutes.

The influence of Lord Shaftesbury—and it was great, especially during Palmerston's régime—owed little to any oratorical powers. Palmerston, who was a Voltairean, "made it right" with the religious world through the worthy philanthropist, and in return secured for his Ministry the support of Exeter Hall. Shaftesbury really appointed the bishops, and he took care that they should be of an Evangelical stamp like himself. But Palmerston having died, and the influence of the Evangelical party in the Church having waned, Shaftesbury, apart from the social movements with which he was connected, was no longer a power in the State.

Among the Parliamentary figures of those by-gone days special interest attached to a little group of members typical of the old school. There was Mr. Henley, who represented the old political squires, and who at nearly eighty years of age (this was in 1868) had spent half his life in the House of Commons. A Nestor among the Tories, he sat with his hat on the back of his head and looked over his spectacles at the Speaker, the per-

sonification of conscientious attention. During the session he almost lived in the House, and in the recess he would go down to his broad acres and make sensible, though narrow speeches to farmers and ploughmen. He had sat in two Cabinets. His phrases, often coarse but always expressive, were famous. To him we owe the, nowadays too common, expression an "ugly rush," a movement on the part of the people which he foresaw as a result of concessions to the spirit of Reform. Another phrase of his, "The pot has been kept boiling so long that there is a danger of its boiling over and doing the devil's own mischief," had no little influence in deciding the provincial Tories to follow Disraeli's lead.

In the debates of 1868 Henley was coarser than usual, and would probably have been checked by the House had he been a younger man. "With regard," he said, "to the land question, we have the proposal of the honourable member for Westminster (Mr. Mill), and that of the honourable member for Birmingham (Mr. Bright). Both these gentlemen proceed by somewhat violent modes, one of which may perhaps be designated as rape, the other by the gentler phrase, seduction."

Then there was Mr. Sidney Herbert, a noble specimen of the English gentleman, of polished manners, kindly disposition, high aims, and refined tastes, with a commanding figure and handsome features; and there was Mr. Baring, "Tom" Baring, who was credited with the profoundest sagacity on financial affairs. Disraeli more than once implored Baring to take the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, but he preferred the position of an irresponsible critic. Yet, if he was right, the

country before he died must have been irretrievably ruined, for the whole of English financial legislation, beginning with Free Trade, had been in opposition to his most solemn admonitions and warnings.

One of the last survivors of the orators of the old school was Mr. Plunket. On the occasion of the contemplated departure of Mr. John Hare for the United States in 1896, at a dinner given to that distinguished actor, Plunket, or rather, as he had then become, Lord Rathmore, made a little speech, in which, addressing the guest of the evening, he said : " Waft him gently, oh breezes ! Blow softly, oh gales ! Treat him kindly, all spirits of the deep ! " and so forth. The effect was exquisite, but the hearer felt that it would be perilous indeed for any one not to the manner born to attempt a similar flight.

Mr. Newdegate, preternaturally solemn-looking, was another veteran, a fine specimen of the British Conservative, with a strong vein of national feeling and a belief in the perfection of the British Constitution that amounted almost to a passion. Poor man ! During the time he sat in the House of Commons he witnessed the removal of one prop after another of that beloved Constitution. He was understood to have taken lessons in elocution, according to some infallible system. To that system he adhered, but it had not the effect he fondly imagined. He would sweep the air with his arms, he would fold them across his breast, then he would shake his forefinger warningly, and drop his voice to a whisper that was intended to make the flesh of his hearers creep. A round of grape-shot could hardly have been more effectual

in clearing the House than the rising of the honourable member. He might be trusted at all times to protest against any lurking danger to the principles of the Protestant Reformation. The very proximity of an adherent of the Church of Rome was abhorrent to him. His face on one occasion, at a Newspaper Press Fund dinner, when Monsignor Capel was called upon to say grace, was a study. Over those stern Protestant features rolled a dark cloud, and the far-darting fire from his eyes should have annihilated the object of his fury, who all the time seemed perfectly unconscious of the whole demonstration.

A bustling, energetic little figure was that of Sir John Bowring. His well-known Benthamism brought some ridicule upon him while he was sitting in the House of Commons, but he lived to see almost every item of his early political creed carried out in English legislation. He was a most amiable man, and he rarely lost a friend, although, politically speaking, many of his old associates became estranged from him when, departing from all the traditions of his life, he forced upon the country a military expedition to China. Bentham held him in high esteem. On one occasion, when some friends were criticising Bowring rather freely in the great philosopher's hearing, the latter said: "Well, what you say of Bowring may be true, but one virtue he possesses which, in my experience, is rare. During our long acquaintance he has never said a word to me in disparagement of his friends." The gentleman who told this story, and who himself had heard Bentham's words, laughed heartily as he thought of the confusion the implied rebuke created.

Bowring was a minor poet of some note, and although a Unitarian, a hymn of his, "In the cross of Christ I glory," found its way into orthodox collections. His Eastern researches inspired him with a sincere respect for Confucius and for some of the Buddhist writings. Whenever he addressed a religious meeting—and he was never really happy until he had an opportunity of doing so—the chances were at least ten to one that he would begin to dilate upon Buddha. Those who knew him knew the premonitory symptoms. "Now for some Buddhism," they would say. His handwriting was execrable. On one occasion, when he wrote a letter for publication in a weekly newspaper, his signature was printed "E. Lanten." That was as near the mark as the united intelligence of the compositor and printer's reader could get. The next week there was a second letter, in which the editor explained that he had been asked to say that the name should not have been "E. Lanten," but "T. Brown." It was not until the third week that the matter was set right.

The life of one notable figure in the House of Commons was made up of strange contrasts. Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, the member for Finsbury, was the nephew of an Earl; his mother was the daughter of a bishop; he was the descendant of a staunch line of Tory ancestry; in marriage connections he was associated with a dozen leading families in the peerage. Out of doors he was the glass of fashion and the mould of form, the associate of the idlers and triflers who "toil not, neither do they spin." In Parliament he was the vehement advocate of universal suffrage, the enemy of the Church as by law established, and the political

associate of men like Feargus O'Connor, the chief of the Chartists. It was Duncombe who in 1842 was selected to present the great Chartist petition which purported to be signed by 1,300,000 persons.

Duncombe spared no one in his defence of the masses against the ruling class, and said things which, from the lips of others, would have brought the speaker into the custody of Mr. Sergeant-at-arms. His dashing, winning manner, his habit of going straight to the heart of his subject, made him irresistible. In his day he was one of the handsomest men about town. He went in for dress, and was as perfect a dandy as D'Orsay himself. He went in for horses, and rode the best hack in the park with as much spirit as he showed in backing the favourite at Newmarket. He was fond of the society of actresses and opera-singers, and they bled him fearfully.

At Drury Lane Theatre at that time, a chosen few of the London lions, including poets, painters, and some five or six leading men of the public press, had the entrée to what was termed the first Green Room, and most conspicuous among the frequenters was Tom Duncombe. In play one of his aristocratic associates, Lord Chesterfield, contrived to win from him a sum which in itself was sufficient to hang a millstone round his neck for the rest of his life. It was no less than £100,000. His father died in 1848, leaving him an estate, which, however, he was compelled at once to sell. Of the purchase money, £130,000, every penny went to pay off his creditors. With all his notorious failings he was extremely popular with his Finsbury constituents, and the tradition of "honest Tom Duncombe" long lingered.

Mr. Bernal Osborne was a power in his way. He was the chartered libertine, the acknowledged wit, of the House. No other man could venture to be so rude without provoking serious resentment. He had been in office, but was rich, and too indolent to do anything. He had an odd, narrow head, and a look of audacity in his face. In politics he was supposed to be a Radical, but he would wander wherever his fancy took him. With a bold front, a ready tongue, a good memory, he gave notice, as it were, the moment he rose, that he was going to be amusing. He had an intimate acquaintance with the jargon of political talkers at the clubs, a dramatic instinct that put a grave and grim face on the rudest farce and never seemed to feel the laughter it created, a really happy choice of illustrative quotations from the most accessible English classics (Virgil he left to the statesmen), and a style of solemn raillery and serious ridicule exactly suited to the temper of an audience who pretended to be in earnest and yet held earnestness a bore.

Bernal Osborne delighted especially in bantering Mr. Bright and other Radical manufacturers on their presumed ignorance of certain subjects. "And now I beg the attention of my honourable friends near me," he would say, "for they probably know enough of English history to know who Sir George Cornwall Lewis was." Or he would airily remark (he had held a commission himself at one time): "My honourable friends near me are no doubt at the present time, on the strength of two nights' debates, great military authorities, but possibly *in their younger days* they did not devote much attention to the subject." It was amusing



to watch the countenances of the members thus referred to, each of them trying hard to look as though he was not included in the reference. In his old age Bernal Osborne wrote a clever little volume of aphorisms, which was privately printed. Here are a few specimen phrases : "Some persons are irreproachable because unapproachable"; "Man proposes, woman poses"; "A fastidiousness which borders on misanthropy"; "Two things alike disagreeable, quarrelling and making up."

A member who delighted the House perhaps even more than Bernal Osborne was Colonel Sibthorp, although, whereas the House laughed with the one, it always laughed at the other. Poor Sibthorp had lived beyond his time, and stood alone as a fine crusted Tory of the old school. To his dying day he would declare to all who would listen to him that the railways were sending the country headlong to ruin.

Few sarcasms have been so often quoted as that of Disraeli on Mr. Beresford Hope's "Batavian grace" and "grotesque eloquence." One has to know something of Mr. Beresford Hope's House of Commons manner to thoroughly understand the description. Mr. Beresford Hope, who was of Dutch origin, was a wealthy man who owned the *Saturday Review*, long celebrated for the severity of its castigations of politicians and authors, and in addition to this his aggressive manner gave offence. Nothing more comical than his style of speaking could be conceived. He would stretch out his arms to their full length, bob his head at the end of every paragraph, and his emphasis was so eccentric as to bear no relation whatever to the sense of the words he was uttering.

The chief object of Beresford Hope's detestation was Mr. Bright, for whom he esteemed himself quite a match, and whom he would, whenever he could, follow in debate. It was vastly entertaining to see how he would endeavour to secure the attention of Mr. Bright, who paid little heed to his wild and whirling words. On one of these occasions Mr. Bright was talking to Mr. Mill, and would not vouchsafe a glance. After a time Mr. Bright went to the front Opposition bench to speak to Mr. Gladstone, and still Mr. Hope kept up the pursuit, raising his voice and keeping his eyes on his would-be victim. At length, despairing of success in any other way, he told the House where Mr. Bright was sitting, and said that that was the right place for him, and he hoped that next year he (Mr. Bright) would take his seat permanently there. Mr. Bright, whose attention was now at last drawn to the speaker, promptly said: "No, no; over there," pointing to the front Government bench, amid loud laughter.

Professor Fawcett, the blind member—that astonishing man who attained almost to the highest position in public life in spite of his sad infirmity—was a very noticeable figure in the House of Commons. He would rise from his seat and feel his way towards the door, in the full confidence that some friendly hand would come forward to assist him. The sternest political antagonist could not resist the mute appeal of the outstretched hands, and in this way he made many acquaintances. No man probably was ever more successful in lessening the terrible infliction of blindness. That he was an angler is well known. At the famous Lloyd Garrison breakfast he was

accompanied by a sweet, timid, intelligent girl, who guided him to his seat. This was his newly wedded wife, now so well known as a political writer. Those who witnessed the scene could not help a feeling of sorrow at the thought that the husband was never destined to see the wife's face.

Fawcett's first essay in political life was not a success. In 1863 he was the defeated candidate for Cambridge. His first meeting, he used to relate, was held in a tavern, but the time came, and he and his personal attendant were the only human beings in the room. After waiting a little while, the Professor conferred with the landlord, and asked if there were not a dozen or so customers at the bar who would like to hear a political speech. The landlord said he would see, and soon a few stragglers, with pipes in their mouths and carrying pots of beer, came in. Subsequently Fawcett became exceedingly popular with the electors of Hackney, but as a philosophical Radical with doubts and scruples and hesitations he gave a very uncertain support to his party in Parliament, and was ever a thorn in the side of his leader, Mr. Gladstone.

Among Parliamentary eccentrics were Jack Reynolds, a good-natured, devil-may-care Irish member, who had been famous for his encounters with the great Sir Robert Peel on finance, a subject with which, as he was reputed to be impecunious, he was said to have a strictly *theoretical* acquaintance; Alderman Pochin, who would say "Dr. 'Assall" when he meant Dr. Hassall, and who, on being corrected, would add blandly: "Yes, I said Dr. 'Assall"; and Mr.

Kavanagh, an unfortunate man without arms or legs. Ordinarily Mr. Kavanagh would enter in a chair which somehow he managed to wheel unaided, but at the end of the sitting he would wait until the House was pretty clear, when his manservant would come to him and he was carried off on the man's back. Assuredly this was one of the strangest sights ever seen within the walls of Parliament.

One O'Sullivan, who in 1869 was Mayor of Cork, although not a member of the House, nearly succeeded in upsetting Mr. Gladstone's Ministry. That eccentric Irishman was in the habit of feasting Fenians and making violent speeches, in one of which he proclaimed that the man O'Farrell, who shot at the Duke of Edinburgh, was a noble patriot. The disgust excited by this was so great that the Government thought it necessary to take notice of the matter. But what were they to do? He had not violated the letter of the law. There was nothing in the statutes by which he could be punished. So they determined to introduce one of a retrospective character. They brought in a bill to remove O'Sullivan from the Mayoralty, and to make him incapable of ever filling it again, "as if he were naturally dead." Mr. Disraeli clearly saw the objections to the proceeding.

It was said that there was insanity in the mayor's family, and his friend Mr. Maguire, who was defending him in the House to the best of his ability, received a telegram as he was speaking. He had been expecting an apology, and he therefore asked the House to excuse him for a moment, as he had a message in his hand which he thought would dispose of the case. He opened the tele-

gram, and to his discomfiture read: "I'll be d—d if I do." At length, however, O'Sullivan was brought to a better frame of mind, and the Government were extricated from a very awkward predicament.

## CHAPTER IX

Mr. Gladstone in later years—Conversations with the Liberal Premier—His prejudice against the Jews—His views on copyright, disestablishment, religious toleration, the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, the taxes on knowledge, divorce—Last meeting with Mr. Bright—Admiration of Edward Irving.

IT was not until years after the occurrence of the incidents in the Houses of Parliament narrated in the previous chapters that the journalist made the personal acquaintance of Mr. Gladstone. As a rule he saw him in the House of Commons, but we have notes of chance meetings, as, for instance, in February 1874, just after the Liberal Premier's defeat, when he records that he met him in Parliament Street, dressed in a rather shabby suit of black, and wearing no overcoat, although the weather was cold. His hat was a hat of many seasons, and the brim was nearly flat. Under his arm he had an umbrella. It seems strange that at that time, although he still had so many years of work before him, it was generally remarked that he was getting to look old, and fears were expressed about the state of his health. That he was then tired of politics, and anxious to devote himself thenceforward to writing in the *Contemporary Review* and elsewhere, no one doubted who was in his confidence.

He was suffering from a fit of despondency. "How little," he said to a friend at that time, "do politics affect the life, the moral life, of a nation! A single good book influences people a vast deal more." The *Review* in question just then was the oddest compound. In the number for April 1874, for instance, Cardinal (then Archbishop) Manning led off with a paper on "Ultramontaniam and Christianity," and was followed by Dr. Vance Smith, the Unitarian member of the Biblical Revision Committee, who had recently told the world how he stayed for some time in the Papal Church, and how he disliked it.

Another meeting with Gladstone was more interesting. It was at the Guildford assizes two years earlier. Gladstone, with all the cares of State on his shoulders, was subpœnaed as a witness in a libel case. Plaintiff and defendants were all resident in London, but by one of those beautiful little arrangements of our law which long-suffering citizens do not seem to mind in the least, they, together with counsel and witnesses, were dragged down to a peaceful little town thirty miles off, in order that the case might be decided. The plaintiff was an official in the Patent Office, and there were irregularities in his accounts which were censured in a Treasury minute signed by Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Stansfeld. The minute was forwarded by the Secretary of the Treasury to the morning papers for publication, and it was against these papers that the action was brought. The case, which was held to be an important one as affecting the liberty of the Press, was decided in favour of the defendants.

Obedient to the subpœna, but with wrath in

his breast, Gladstone, accompanied by his two colleagues, stepped up to the bench at noon. He bowed low to the judge, who returned the bow, and then stood facing the Court. He and his friends were wanted to prove their signatures to the offending document, but it turned out that these were not in dispute, so that no evidence on the point was required. The Premier whispered in rather severe tones to Mr. Hawkins, the counsel, blaming him for bringing him from town at "great inconvenience," but he soon recovered his good temper, and, strolling about the High Street in Guildford, while waiting for a train back to London, seemed to be pleased at getting a little relaxation. He went into a shop and bought some china. On giving his name and address, he said to the shopkeeper, with a humorous twinkle of the eye: "If you have any doubt as to giving me credit, I refer you to my friend here, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Lowe), who will give me a character."

In our notes we get just a glimpse of Mr. Gladstone's manner in the early 'seventies, when he was at the Literary Fund dinner, but only gather that his conversation was made up of speeches, and that his words and sentences were from books rather than from men's lips. It was on June 20, 1887, at dinner at Lord Wolverton's house in Stratton Street, that the first meeting took place between the statesman and journalist—the first so familiar a figure to the second, and the second perhaps unknown by sight to the first. It was just before the jubilee celebration of the reign of Queen Victoria, and the streets of London were choked with people bent on seeing the rehearsals



of the illuminations. In spite of this the old man came punctually to his time. As he drove up in an open carriage with Mrs. Gladstone there was a loud shout from the surging crowd, who had made way for the vehicle to pass, that for a moment alarmed the host and a solitary guest who had arrived early. "It has been a difficult journey," said Gladstone, as he entered the room; "if it had not been for the police I could never have got through." Lord Wolverton made the introduction. "I know you very well by reputation, Mr. Robinson," said the hero of a hundred Parliamentary battles, and then he said something complimentary about his hearer having recently accepted fresh journalistic responsibilities. The following are extracts from notes made the next day :—

Mrs. Gladstone told me that there was some hooting on the way, but that it was drowned in the cheers. But to think of the madness of driving through such a crowd in an open vehicle! One blow from a drunkard might have changed the aspect of English politics. Mrs. Gladstone wore a thick necklace hung with diamonds, but Lord Wolverton made her promise to leave these with him to be locked up in his safe, and not trust a second time to the mercies of the crowd. Mr. Gladstone admired the room, the walls, the furniture, knick-knacks and the rest, and asked who had arranged it. He was told it was So-and-so, the name being Jewish. "I think you knew his father," added Lord Wolverton; "you used to buy china of him." "But," said Mr. Gladstone in a tone of amazement, "that can't be the man who decorated this room for you. Why, he is a Jew, and there never was a Jew who had any taste." And he seemed quite disturbed to find that So-and-so really was the man.

Mrs. Gladstone has a sense of humour. She asked me if I knew what most troubled the Royal mind in connection with the morrow. I said I hoped it was not dynamite. "Oh no," she said; "but the large fat horses which are brought out on these occasions show a great tendency to *roll*; they like to flop down and roll over, and the stable people are afraid that this desire will come over them to-morrow." She said that she and her spouse would be glad to be out of town and not in the Abbey, but if they absented themselves "it will be said we are revolutionists, *Socinians*, and I don't know what."

The other guests were Mr. Whitbread, Mr. Arnold Morley, Mr. Carnegie, and Senator Blaine. Mr. Carnegie did not impress me as a strong man, but I had little opportunity of judging, as he said little. I had a long talk with Blaine, who is a sensible and agreeable man enough, but who belongs to a school of American politicians for whom I have no respect.

I had resolved that nothing should tempt me into any discussion with Mr. Gladstone. I had said dozens of times to myself that he might (such is my respect for him) say what he liked; yet before dinner was over I actually found myself engaged in an animated controversy with him. It was about copyright. Mr. Gladstone expressed the opinion that publishers should be allowed to publish any new books if they gave the author royalties. I never heard anything so impracticable. He said that literature was considerably injured by the high price of books. I asked him what he would do in the case of a writer like George Eliot. Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co. were believed to have given £8000 for *Romola*. How were they to get this back if they did not charge a high price for the book? "Trust the people," said Mr. Gladstone. "But," said I, "you would have to sell perhaps millions before any profit appeared, if the price was low. The experiment has been tried. So far," I added, "am I from thinking the present law of copyright hard upon society, I think it is hard on authors." How-

ever, he had got hold of the royalty fad (borrowed from Farrar) and had talked rashly. Mrs. Gladstone looked amazed at my opposition.

Mr. Gladstone talked on many subjects. He gave the history of the Hudson's Bay Territory in most picturesque language. He told a story of Macaulay receiving £8000 for his *History*, and escaping paying income tax for the amount on the ground that it was principal, not interest. Mr. Carnegie told Mr. Gladstone that if he would write his autobiography, he would give him £50,000 for the American rights. The Grand Old Man was greatly pleased at the implied compliment. . . . Mr. Gladstone is a winning companion, entirely free from hauteur or familiarity. He has an exquisite smile and an eagle flash of the eye one cannot forget.

Rather more than eighteen months afterwards, a second meeting took place. Here is the record of it :—

On the 22nd February 1889, I dined with a small party at Mr. Stuart Rendel's in Whitehall Place. There were present at the dinner-table Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, Mr. George Russell, Lord and Lady Aberdeen, Sir C. Forster, Mr. Arnold Morley, and Sir Andrew Clark. Before dinner I had a chat with Mrs. Gladstone. She seemed to have aged since I met her at Lord Wolverton's. She told me her husband was never dull, never bored. Even near Naples, shut up in a villa with Mr. Rendel, with a landslip preventing him from getting to the city save by sea, he was not dull. "With books," said I, "one is never dull." "Oh, it's not the books," she exclaimed; "he is always writing." It is quite touching to note the devotion of the good old lady to her illustrious partner. She cannot persuade herself he has ever made a mistake. She actually asked me to rejoice with her over his having put Parnell in gaol (a very awkward thing for him, now that he has to depend upon the Irish vote to carry his Home Rule scheme), on the ground

that it gave the Irish leader time to reflect, and he saw how sad it was to have any fellowship with those extreme men! "He came out of prison an altered man," she said; "and I have always thought it was a providential experience for him."

I sat next but one to the Grand Old Man, Sir Andrew Clark being between us. After dinner Mr. Gladstone drew his chair to mine, and talked delightfully for an hour. His exquisite courtesy compels you to like him. He talked of the deterioration of the House of Commons, chiefly of the Conservative party, and contrasted the men now sitting as Tories with those of his younger days. He told me that the Conservative, or rather reactionary, party in Europe looked above all things to the restoration of the temporal power of the Pope. He reminded me how stoutly the Tories in England, despite their Protestantism, had defended that, and instanced Sir Robert Inglis himself. He told me I should probably live to see the Welsh and Scotch Churches disestablished, but the Church of England, through the wonderful devotion of its clergy, through the way in which its property was interwoven with the rights of individuals, and through its strength in a hundred ways, would, he thought, not be disestablished in our time. "I confess," he said, "I cannot picture it to myself as an actual possibility." The broadening of the Church by way of its creeds, he averred, would not satisfy the dissenters. He pointed out that the real motive with the reactionaries was not spiritual but secular. George III. was reputed to be very pious and high-principled, but he never failed to give way if political reasons were in view. The German Emperor professed to believe in divine right, but he took Hanover when he had the chance.

The next meeting with Mr. Gladstone took place not long afterwards:—

*May 1889.*—I have become quite an "old crony" of Mr. Gladstone's. Dining with him at Mr. George Russell's (Mr. G. W. E. Russell), the only other gentle-

man present being Mr. H. W. Paul (the brilliant journalist, once M.P. for South Edinburgh), he struck up a long talk about all sorts of things, tending generally towards theology. When he said that Voltaire did not understand liberty, and when he contrasted him with the founders of the American Republic, I contended that Voltaire had a livelier sense of the rights of conscience than any public man of his time, and had repeatedly shown it, and that though he didn't know much about Parliaments, I felt certain he would have opposed any constitution that admitted of slavery. He (the Grand Old Man) told me he had been attending a meeting of the King's College Governors on the subject of the Rev. Dr. Momerie's heretical volume on Inspiration. The reverend gentleman being one of the professors of the College, some of the Council were up in alarm. "Surely," I said, "the Council are not going to repeat the dreadful mistake they made in the case of the Rev. F. D. Maurice?"

He admitted that that *was* a mistake, but proceeded to explain that Dr. Momerie was not credited with much judgment. I urged with might and main that the Council at least ought to wait until he did introduce his heresies into his College teaching and not anticipate. I pointed out that since Mr. Maurice's time opinion on such matters had made great strides, and that if Dr. Momerie was dismissed from his Chair (Logic and Metaphysics) on account of his sermons at the Foundling, the whole body of secular opinion would protest. "Nothing," I said, "is more marked than the growth of this respect for intellectual liberty. Newspapers that would have been silent in Mr. Maurice's case would now be vehement in protest." He admitted this, and allowed me to see that he would be no party to interfering with the clergyman until there was some better reason. Nevertheless he winced at Dr. Momerie's opinions, which he declared he thought amounted to actual unbelief. I asked if it was possible that the Bishop of London and the Dean of Westminster, who are on the Council, sanctioned interference with

Dr. Momerie,<sup>1</sup> and he at once said that both those dignitaries had opposed interference. The real "persecutor" (he did not use that word) was Lord Grimthorpe. We talked at some length about Calvinism, various dissenting leaders, and freedom of thought.

Not long afterwards, in the same year, the diarist notes :—

Yet more interesting was our talk at the dinner given to him by Mr. Lucy (Mr. H. W. Lucy, the "Toby" of *Punch*) last Tuesday, the others present being Lord Granville, Lord Charles Beresford, Mr. Plunket, and a number of artists and journalists. Mrs. Lucy sat between us at dinner (I was on her right), and when she left, Mr. Gladstone drew his chair to mine and forthwith began to tell me that the Momerie affair had progressed most favourably, and that the gentleman's chair would henceforth be dissociated from that of theology. This led to theology again, to Jonathan Edwards, to Mr. Spurgeon and Dr. Parker (both of whom he criticised freely), the liberalising of the Scotch (assisted, he admitted, by Court influence), and cognate subjects.

There was an awkward moment during the dinner when Lord Granville asked Mr. Gladstone what he thought of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill. Mr. Gladstone proceeded to say that he was in favour of allowing the civil marriage, in order to prevent the children from being, as they are now in the eye of the law, illegitimate. "The offspring of such marriages," he said, "are now bastards, and I do not approve of that, but I can never regard such unions as Christian marriages." Now it was well known to most of those who were present that one gentleman at the table, a Catholic, had, with the Pope's sanction, married his deceased wife's sister, and that technically his children came under the stigma so plainly

<sup>1</sup> In the *Contemporary Review* for April 1891, Dr. Momerie published a narrative of all the leading circumstances. He afterwards gave up his professorship.

indicated by the old High Churchman. The gentleman referred to pulled at his moustache in a nervous sort of way, but wisely took no other heed of Mr. Gladstone's words, which were evidently spoken in complete ignorance of the pain he must have been giving. I at once tackled Mr. Gladstone on the subject, pointing out that such marriages were now by the consent of the Crown perfectly lawful in the colonies, and I pointed out the anomaly; but he evaded this by turning to the subject of divorces in America, which shocked him. "There were 25,000 last year," he said.

He told me he had had a long correspondence with some gentlemen in the United States who seemed to agree with him on the evils of divorce, and the other day he was gratified to learn that they had formed an association the better to carry out their wishes. He wrote them a congratulatory letter, and urged them to send him a prospectus and statement of their views. "These documents," said Mr. Gladstone, "arrived a day or two ago, and I regret to say that they are a great disappointment to me. I find they have formed an association, not to prevent divorces, but to assimilate the laws on divorce in the different States, in other words, to make divorce more lawful and accessible." I could hardly keep my countenance, but I managed to do so. Mr. Gladstone was too indignant to see the ludicrous side of the misunderstanding.

I observed that Mr. Plunket invariably addressed Mr. Gladstone as "Sir," with the utmost respect. Mr. Harry Furniss was vexed to see that the Grand Old Man had put on a small collar (that artist's sketches of him in *Punch* always represented him with a collar of huge dimensions). I attempted to comfort him by saying that it was certain to be under his ear before the dinner was over, and sure enough this was the case.

Mr. Gladstone told me that the last time he spoke to Mr. Bright was in Regent Street. He thought that Mr. Bright, without actually wishing to "cut" him, rather wanted not to see him; but he could not allow that to be,

so he went up to him and had some cordial words. In parting Mr. Gladstone said: "Well, I cannot but think that we shall be brought together again some day." "Do you think so?" said Mr. Bright; "do you think so?" A little later Mr. Bright's fatal illness began. Mr. Bright was never a favourite of mine, and I quoted to Mr. Gladstone a bit of a speech I once heard Lord John Russell deliver in the House of Commons, in which he observed: "What I complain of in the honourable member for Manchester is that he is a man of *such a narrow mind*." Mr. Gladstone admitted this was true in a sense, but he enlarged upon his deep sincerity and truthfulness. I remarked that Mr. Bright in his conversation always seemed to dwell upon such little details; his authorities were generally some members of the Society of Friends, and he showed a readiness to believe all sorts of people who are known to be either quacks or feather-headed fanatics.

When I told Mr. Gladstone I considered the greatest reform in my time was the removal of the Paper Duties, he said it was the one which gave him the greatest anxiety and trouble, for, with the exception of Milner Gibson, his colleagues were actually working against him.

The last of these conversations with Mr. Gladstone took place at the house of Mr. Henry Oppenheim in Bruton Street. Mr. Oppenheim was at that time one of the principal proprietors of the *Daily News*.

On July 15, 1890, Mr. Henry Oppenheim entertained at his beautiful house in Bruton Street the literary staff of the *Daily News*, and the leading members of the Gladstone party. I was placed next to Mr. Gladstone, and had yet another interesting talk. He was suffering from some stomach weakness, and asked for a small quantity of brandy, which he drank with water. We talked again about Jonathan Edwards, and he said that the old Calvinist



had never made any provision for the will. He treated human experience as though it was a pair of scales into which some unseen power placed the weights. This led us to talk of the mystery of the will and the strange phenomena by which some men can influence others without the medium of speech. I interested him by telling him of my power of "willing," instancing my handling of Stuart Cumberland (whose feats had greatly puzzled Mr. Gladstone)—how I made that gentleman run about my room and do certain things by mere *willing* him to do them. Mr. Gladstone told me that he held his mind in suspense on this and similar things, feeling convinced, however, that though we cannot define this newly discovered power nor explain it, its existence is not to be denied.

We talked of Carlyle. Mr. Gladstone had met him at various times, but the philosopher was so "abrupt" (*Anglicè*, rude) at an early interview that they were never intimate. "Carlyle," said Mr. Gladstone, with a delightful smile, "never liked me, and it is curious that his dislike of Disraeli was equally strong. It is difficult to say which of us he detested most. My first offence was in something I said about Goethe." Edward Irving Mr. Gladstone believed to be a man of genius. He had heard him preach, and retained a vivid recollection of his eloquence. I was sorry to find that Mr. Gladstone did not think so highly as I do of Mrs. Oliphant's *Memoir* of him. She could not, he said, fail to write a good book, but she did not seem to grasp the real character of Irving.

He spoke highly of the literary articles of the *Daily News*. He asked whether I thought the *Times* would ever recover its former hold? The Rev. Thomas Mozley, he said, had been a great power to the *Times*. Talking of late hours, Mr. Gladstone said he never could work after leaving the House—had never done so. Lord Clarendon, he said, would constantly work after leaving the Lords until eight in the morning. Disraeli, he declared, cared really for no one but the Jews, and had a

contempt for popular liberties. One night, in a debate upon Jewish disabilities, Disraeli had solemnly told the House that all nations which persecuted the Jews had been punished by the Almighty, a curse had fallen on them. The Tories shuddered. Lord John Russell, turning to him (Mr. Gladstone), said : "What an extraordinary sight ! Disraeli has no conscience save where the Jews are concerned."

## CHAPTER X

A character sketch of Mr. Gladstone—How he wrote with his eyes shut—His tastes and amusements—Mrs. Gladstone's devotion—The Archbishop's invitation: an awkward mistake—Another Liberal Premier: Lord Rosebery—His style and manner—Some conversations with him—No. 10 Downing Street—Lord Rosebery as Chairman of the London County Council—Lord Randolph Churchill—Mr. Chamberlain.

OF Mr. Gladstone in later life many anecdotes have been told, but not all have appeared in print. For some years before his death he suffered from constantly increasing deafness, and would hold his hand to his ear when anything was said that he did not want to lose. He was not always aware, moreover, that his remarks to his neighbours could be heard by persons who were not intended to hear them. "What's he talking about?" he would ask in a loud tone when one of his supporters was on his legs in the House; "I can't hear a word he says." On one occasion he said, looking across the House: "Who is the Jew opposite who stares so hard at me? What's his name?" The gentleman in question was not a Jew, and, though a Conservative, happened to be one of Mr. Gladstone's admirers. He heard the remark and was naturally hurt, for it was only Mr. Gladstone's fancy that he had been staring at him.

But in spite of any little failing of the sort,

Gladstone was indeed "a wonderful man," as a well-known devotee was never tired of saying. In the middle of a great debate on Home Rule, when his years had already extended far beyond the allotted span, he went home to dinner and played at backgammon with Mr. Armitstead, winning two games out of three. In conversation he was not a good listener, especially with those who did not talk on subjects in which he was specially interested. Mr. Godkin, the distinguished American journalist, used to tell how Mr. Gladstone asked him once to call on him and have a chat. He talked for fully one hour, and his visitor could not get in a single word. At last Mr. Gladstone rose and said how very much he had enjoyed the *conversation*, and how thankful he was to Mr. Godkin for calling.

The great statesman's rather too oratorical style in private talk was, it is well known, disliked by the late Queen. It is also known that he was not a favourite of hers, notwithstanding that he was the most punctilious of men as regards the respect and deference due to the Sovereign, and although he had more than once offended the Radical wing of his party by his zealous advocacy of the interests of the Royal family on the subject of Parliamentary grants. The present King, then Prince of Wales, always showed him, however, the utmost courtesy and kindness. At a small gathering in the beginning of 1897, the Prince, as he then was, greatly pleased Mrs. Gladstone by kissing her hand most respectfully, and further, he and his son, the Duke of York, insisted on the veteran statesman taking precedence of them on leaving the room. On the same occasion Gladstone motioned to Lords Ripon,

Spencer, and Tweedmouth, who were fellow-guests, to go before him. They protested, but at length Lord Ripon said : " Oh, you know what a masterful man he is. He *will* have his way, so come along," and along they went.

To the ladies Mr. Gladstone was always very gallant, but it was, especially on public occasions, in a fierce sort of way, and unless they knew him well, they were half afraid of him. That " ecclesiastical manner " that Lord Salisbury once decried in him was very noticeable when he was at church. He had strong notions as to what was decorous in a place of worship. At the wedding of his son Henry at St. Margaret's, Westminster, in 1890, he looked as stern as a judge as he passed down the church in the midst of a whispering and gossiping throng who tried to catch his eye. It was strange to notice on that occasion, by the way, remembering Mr. Gladstone's polemical writings against the Vatican, that a very large proportion of the persons present were Catholics. A young Catholic from the Oratory School at Birmingham showed the company to their seats. " What does this mean ? " the young man was asked. " Oh," he said, smiling, " the bride is my cousin." The young lady (Miss Rendel) looked shyness itself as she walked up the aisle on her father's arm with eyes on the ground and her face as white as the veil on her head, but when she came back on her husband's arm she was radiant.

Late in life Gladstone had some affection of one eye, and he was recommended not to try his sight by writing at too great length. Such was his passion for work, however, that he accustomed himself to write with his eyes shut to obviate the

danger. An intimate friend once remonstrated with him on seeing him writing. "It is very wrong of you," he said, "to sit write, write, writing at that table when you have the use of only one of your eyes." "No," said the wonderful old man, "I don't need that eye at all when I am at this kind of work. I have been writing mechanically without using either eye for the last hour." It was in this way that he wrote the whole of his essay on "Heresy and Schism" that appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* for August 1894.

Gladstone was remarkably simple in his tastes as regards amusements. Staying at a country house on one occasion, he accompanied his host and two or three children to a circus. He was then about seventy years of age, and was highly gratified with a sight so novel. The clown gave him especial pleasure, and for some days afterwards he would turn to the host in conversation and say: "As that amusing fellow we saw the other day observed," and so forth. For theatrical performances either he had no liking or so busy a life did not allow him to witness them except at very rare intervals, and his knowledge of what concerned the contemporary drama was very slight. He actually expressed the opinion that Mr. Pennington, a gallant survivor of the famous charge of the Light Brigade, but a mouthing, ranting actor, who moved his shoulders and eyebrows up and down with strange energy and persistency, was the greatest living tragedian.

The great deference which Gladstone's colleagues showed to him, their reverence for his character, did not prevent their making at times little jokes against him among themselves. At a

Cabinet Council at which he was making a second attempt to agree to a compromise with the Lords on the Redistribution Bill, one of them passed to another a slip of paper on which was written : "The old man is like the apple-woman at the corner of the street, who, finding that her apples do not sell, spits upon them and rubs them on her sleeve, and offers them as something new." This did not prevent his colleagues from bursting (literally) into tears at the Cabinet Council at which he announced his intended retirement.

In those last days, when the aged statesman was slowly dying of an incurable complaint, he bore himself with the utmost dignity and resignation, secure in the consolations of religion. Only for a moment did he despond. On coming home from the Continent, soon after the nature of his malady had become known to him, he said to a friend who went to meet him : "You see in me the most miserable man in the world." The feeling must have been caused by great physical exhaustion. It soon wore off, and those who knew him in his last days dwell upon the serenity and quiet courage with which he bore himself to the end.

Gladstone, it has been said, despised little arts. Mrs. Gladstone, in her zeal for her husband, however, would not disdain to try to win over a recalcitrant follower by a judicious invitation to tea. It was said at the time that Mr. Gladstone wrote to congratulate Lord Rosebery on the victory of his horse Ladas in the Derby. In reality, as was averred by one who knew her well, that letter was written by Mrs. Gladstone, and her husband knew nothing about it.

One more anecdote of the dear old lady. In June 1892 she wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mrs. Benson asking them to dinner. The night came, but no Archbishop. The company waited from eight till half-past, then till a quarter to nine, when Mr. Gladstone said: "One of two things: either we must go without our dinner—for it is spoiling—or we must eat it at once." So they sat down at nine. At a quarter past nine in came the prelate and his wife. It turned out that Mrs. Gladstone's letter had been written upon notepaper bearing the inscription of Dollis Hill (where the old couple sometimes resided). Dr. Benson and his wife had driven there from Lambeth—about nine miles—found out the mistake and that Mr. Gladstone was at his house in Carlton Terrace, and driven back. One at least of the guests present expressed curiosity to know the exact language employed by His Grace in returning to his carriage at Dollis Hill.

Another Liberal Prime Minister with whom Robinson had many interesting talks was Lord Rosebery. As Lord Rosebery is still a living force in politics, great discretion must be used in recording any of his utterances, although it may be added that, in any case, there is nothing in them that does not show him in the most amiable light. At dinner at his residence in Berkeley Square (the date was June 30, 1887), he reminded the diarist of Lord Byron, with his round full neck and smooth face. He wore a very loose collar. His expression was extremely good-tempered, with just a little look of audacity and humour in the eyes. As a matter of fact he is one of the kindest of men.



One feels at home with him at once on meeting him, and he has a keen sense of humour and good-natured chaff that is a sweetener of life. His fault as a public man is that he is over-modest; too distrustful of himself, for which reason he has hitherto failed to inspire that enthusiasm that was created by Mr. Gladstone's harangues.

At a dinner given to him at the Reform Club in April 1894 by thirty or forty members of the Liberal Party, Sir Wilfrid Lawson presiding, Lord Rosebery declared he had never wanted to be Premier; the post had been forced upon him, and it was almost against his conscience to take it. He was, he said, ready to go at any moment. Then he told how King Leopold answered some of his discontented subjects in 1848. He said his portmanteau was already packed, and that he had ordered the beds at Claremont to be aired. They were taken aback by this, and he died in his bed many years afterwards, still King of the Belgians. Lord Rosebery, at this dinner, told a very good story (for he is always amusing: his irony is particularly effective) about a gentleman who was travelling in the Southern United States at a time when conflicts were going on between the negroes and the lower white population. Bludgeons were used by one side and razors by the other. The visitor was being shaved by a negro barber, and noticed the extreme bluntness of the razor. "Yes, sar," said the barber, "it is vurry blunt, sar; I was out last night, sar, wid de boys."

In the course of the same speech the young Liberal Premier made a statement that was eminently characteristic. He said that on one occasion he had told Lord Beaconsfield that the solitary

advantage he found in being a peer was that it generally procured him a seat in the Peers' Gallery of the House of Commons. It is well known that Lord Rosebery, whose talents would gain him a high place among the orators of the House of Commons, chafes at being excluded from the legitimate sphere of his activities while being condemned to the cold formality of the House of Lords. In conversation in the May of the same year at his town house, he expressed the opinion that Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour were by far the ablest men in the late Government.

He seemed nervous and anxious. On being questioned about his Home Rule speech, in which he spoke of the "predominant partner," meaning England as distinguished from the rest of the kingdom, he declared it was that speech that was the cause of all the criticisms that troubled him, and of the distrust expressed by the Labour Party. He had not spoken for five months, he said, when he delivered it, without any premeditation. His hearer reminded him that no Premier had escaped a fierce fire; Palmerston, Russell, Gladstone, had all been assailed with the greatest bitterness. How did he expect to get off scot free? He observed that much of the friendly criticism he had received had been from the Unionist organs, a fact that distressed him greatly, as this seemed to be dictated by a belief that he was going to turn traitor to his party. From his speeches one would gather that he is of a sanguine temperament, but in reality the reverse is the fact. Speaking of the question of religious teaching in schools, he declared that he would rather children were taught any faith, no matter how full it might be of superstitions, than

that they should be, like so many French children, brought up without any religion at all.

In the following year—1895—Lord Rosebery entertained a good deal at No. 10 Downing Street, that historic house where Pitt lived, the great Mr. Pitt whose portrait hangs on one of the walls. Lord Rosebery said he detested the place, that it was terribly cold, and that he only used it as an office and not, as Mr. Gladstone did, as a residence. He seemed to think that the Newcastle programme was a mistake, and declared that he had practically had no alternative, such was the condition of the Liberal Party at the time, but to accept the Premiership. In short, he was full of diffidence as usual. He said he would rather see the Tories return with a majority of sixty at the next election than one of ten. A Government with a small majority spoke with lessened authority in the councils of Europe. Illustrations of this had been seen (he referred perhaps to France), and in England the Tories, with only a small majority, would be tempted to coquet with socialism and encourage methods and legislation that could not but be harmful to the nation. In answer to a casual remark, he happened to mention the rather curious fact that, as Foreign Minister in 1893, he had spent, upon two receptions at the Foreign Office, one-half of his whole year's official income. Any one who was present at one of those receptions, when the whole of the walls and staircases of the magnificent building were dressed in flowers—mostly roses—must have guessed that the cost was enormous.

Lord Rosebery's good work at the London County Council is well known. His assiduity was very great, although one would hardly have thought

local politics would have been to the taste of one of his habit of mind. If he had a fault in his manner of conducting business at Spring Gardens, it was that he was too zealous. He never could bear to have the public time wasted, and he had no patience with those who wasted it. In presiding over the Council, moreover (the late Sir Arthur Arnold is the authority for this), he could not resist the temptation to enter into the discussions. "I didn't interrupt Mr. So-and-so," he said one day, "though he wandered from the subject, for I knew he was reading the epitaph over his own motion." "Will the honourable member," he observed on another occasion, "not be so vague; will he let us have it in the *concrete*?" The poor fellow thus admonished seemed quite at a loss to know what he was to do. He probably connected the word *concrete* with building operations.

That strange, erratic, and singularly gifted politician—one hesitates to say statesman—Lord Randolph Churchill figures in our notes, but it is towards the close of his career, when the nervous malady that overcame him and caused his painful breakdown in the House of Commons was as yet unsuspected. At a dinner on March 1, 1890, at the Garrick Club, given by the late Mr. Montagu Williams, the police magistrate, he talked in a rather wild sort of way. Gladstone, he said, would "sweep the country" at the next election. The London Press only represented the London clubs. The provincial papers alone represented public opinion. Even the little local papers were more read than the London dailies. Our diarist says:—

With mischief in my mind, I asked him if he knew what had become of a certain Paddington paper which had

been started to represent Tory democracy. (I knew it had been carried on with his money.) He said, after looking at me and laughing, that it was dead. I suggested that the failure must have embittered its conductors against the morning papers. The best of the joke is, that he was sitting opposite Sir Edward Lawson (now Lord Burnham), who has made, out of a London daily paper, one of the largest fortunes—perhaps the largest fortune—ever acquired in journalism.

Lord Randolph was his mother's favourite son, and she would relate with great pride how he had been paid £2250 for his articles in the *Daily Graphic* on South Africa. They were certainly not worth the money, unless for the sake of his name. Plenty of better work is done daily by journalists who are never heard of. The one noticeable thing about the articles in question is, that the writer, having come to the conclusion that Mr. Gladstone had been right about the Transvaal, said so with characteristic courage.

With Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, as we have seen, Robinson was very early acquainted. They did not afterwards, however, come very frequently in contact. In June 1896 they met at the Imperial Institute for the first time for some years.

It was in the midst of a gay and glittering throng, and there was no time for talk. "I am very glad you came," he said. "It brings back old times," I replied; "I'm very glad to shake hands with you once more." "This is neutral territory," said he. "And very pleasant," was my feeble reply. The past came back to me so vividly that I was quite agitated. I could see the Unitarian omnibus and recall the images of a number of dear friends now gone.

The trifling incident described above is given because it is characteristic of Mr. Chamberlain, who in private life appears to be almost entirely

free from political animosity. A journalist who had particularly distinguished himself by his attacks on that statesman, once wrote recommending some man (an excellent man, it is true) for a certain appointment. He received a polite reply, in which Mr. Chamberlain expressed the opinion that the gentleman in question was a very fit person for the post, and said that he would appoint him accordingly.

The last time Mr. Chamberlain and Robinson had met before was when the former had just been made a Cabinet Minister for the first time; and, strange to say, it was probably to him that Mr. Chamberlain first divulged the news. It happened in this way. In those days Mr. Chamberlain was a member of the Reform Club. One evening Robinson was sitting there alone, in the smoking-room. He thus describes the scene:—

Mr. Chamberlain rushed in, and said, in a hurried sort of way: "Have you seen Mr. Bright?" "Oh, do tell me," I said; "you can do me a great service. It is at such times you can help me with information. You are going to join the Government, I believe, and that is why you are asking for Mr. Bright." He looked at me for a moment and laughed. "Well," he said, "if you like to say so, I shall not contradict you." And I *did* say so.

## CHAPTER XI

Royal personages—Queen Victoria—Her appearance and manner in public—Fanciful descriptions in the Press—Sir E. Landseer's anecdote of the Prince Consort—The Swazis and their "baby"—The Duke of Saxe-Coburg—The Duke and the alderman—Prince Leopold—The Duke of Teck—An eccentric member of the Royal family—Popular rejoicings and mottoes.

THE historian of the future will not lack material from which to draw a character of the deeply lamented Queen Victoria, who had no more sincere admirer than the journalist whose memoranda form the basis of the present volume. The evidence, however, will require sifting. As regards her virtues, her deep compassion, her earnest desire for the welfare of others, no one would venture to suggest a doubt. But out-and-out hero-worshippers are apt to attribute to her a knowledge of statecraft that has been possessed by few statesmen or diplomats. It is difficult to admit this view as one reads the simple outpourings of her womanly heart in the *Early Years of the Prince Consort* and her *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands*, although her tact and common-sense have become proverbial.

A shrewd, sensible, kindly, affectionate lady, whose influence on society was of the purest, that will doubtless be the verdict of history. Of her kindness of heart, innumerable anecdotes are

which Royal personages were concerned, to represent them as invariably shedding, at the slightest provocation, what sentimental writers in bygone days were wont to call the tear of sensibility. As a matter of fact the Queen had far too keen a sense of personal dignity to give way to demonstrations of the kind before the public gaze. The journalistic custom in question seems to have originated at the time of the marriage of the Princess Royal at St. James's Palace. On that occasion "interesting" accounts appeared in the papers full of "crimson blushes," "fast-falling tears," "agitation," and all the rest of it.

The artist in words who represented the *Times* declared that "the bride flung herself upon her mother's bosom with a suddenness and depth of feeling that thrilled every heart. Again and again Her Majesty strained her to her heart and kissed her, and tried to conceal her emotion; but it was both needless and vain, for all perceived it, and there were few who did not share it. We need not mention how the bridegroom embraced her, and how, as she quitted him with the tears now plainly stealing down her cheeks, she threw herself into the arms of her father, while her Royal husband was embraced by the Queen in a manner that evinced all that only a mother's love can show. The most affecting recognition, however, took place between the bridegroom and his Royal father, for the latter seemed overpowered with emotion, and the former, after clasping him twice to his heart, knelt and kissed his parent's hand."

A little farther down the reader finds the bridegroom wringing the Prince Consort's hand, and is told that by the working of his face it was evident he "could not trust his tongue to speak." There



is a touching scene ! Prince Arthur imploring Hubert to be merciful, or Lady Jane Grey going to the scaffold, could not be more pathetic. The reading public have now grown accustomed to this sort of thing. They like it, and, as advertisers say, they see that they get it. But they must surely suspect that it is romance. Actors in scenes such as are described by the too picturesque writer just quoted, school themselves almost from their tenderest years against such demonstrations.

As a matter of fact, on the occasion referred to, the bridegroom looked neither bashful nor cold ; his feelings were perfectly under his command, and his demeanour was simply that of studied respect. The bride looked very youthful, very engaging, and very happy as she walked up the Chapel Royal, looking from right to left and bowing with perfect composure. And after the ceremony was over there were no flingings upon bosoms, or strainings to hearts, or throwing about of arms or other theatrical effects. A few quiet kisses of affection were exchanged, without tears, without extravagance. The whole of that portion of the scene was over in a few seconds. Such at all events is the account of one honest eye-witness who was present in the Chapel gallery.

In her later years, the affection which the Queen showed towards her children and grandchildren gave a good deal of trouble indirectly to officials about the Court. One of these related that during the severe weather of the winter of 1894-95, when the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York were skating on the lake in the Buckingham Palace grounds, he had to telegraph frequently to Her Majesty to let her know no accident had

occurred. As there was no real danger, it was suggested to him by a Royal Prince that he should say that a company of Grenadiers had marched over the ice, but this he refused to do. Eventually, however, a message was concocted to the effect that the lake would *bear* a company. The water is very deep in places. It appears that before the skating began, the ice was bored and found to be some feet thick. Still, it was a disquieting thought that both the direct heirs to the throne were on it at once. The official who related this anecdote said that he had to write frequently to the Queen, and that for that purpose he practised a sort of text-hand, as she would not read small characters, and she detested type-writing.

The late Sir Edwin Landseer told a story of the Queen and the Prince Consort that was extremely amusing. The artist was staying at Balmoral, and one day, after dinner, some extraordinary tales were told of the sagacity of dogs. Landseer, not to be outdone, gave an account of a dog who was sent to fetch a five-pound note that had been hidden, and brought back the money in gold. Everybody laughed except the Prince Consort. Later on, after the guests had retired to rest, Landseer heard a knock at his bedroom door. It was Colonel Phipps, who said, with a smile: "The Prince wished me to tell you, Sir Edwin, that the Queen does not believe the story of the dog bringing back the five sovereigns."

There was probably some mistake on the part of the Prince Consort, for inability to see a joke was not one of the Queen's characteristics. A painter to whom she once sat for her likeness said that, while he was painting one afternoon, some

ladies of the Court being present, an Indian servant brought something in on a tray, and they talked about him after he had left. One lady said the Indian servants were more likely to be steady than others, because their religion did not allow them to drink intoxicating liquors. "Our friend the Shah," said the Queen, laughing (it was after his visit), "has got over *that* prejudice, at any rate." The Queen would also tell a very good story about a gentleman well known in society. She was visiting some friends of his, and, meeting him in the grounds, she said: "Good afternoon, Mr. —, I have not seen you lately. I hope you are well." The gentleman, who was terribly short-sighted, replied: "I am quite well, thank you, but—pray pardon me—I've seen your face before, but for the life of me I can't remember your name."

The visit of the Swazi deputation to England at the close of 1894 led to the usual curious incidents sure to occur when semi-savagery and civilisation are brought into contact with each other, and in one of them the Queen was concerned. The Swazi braves went to Windsor, and had an audience of Her Majesty. They were very graciously received. One of their number began to speak, and an interpreter followed him phrase by phrase. "We come, O great mother," he said, "to bring to you our babe. Take him, O mother, to thy knees; fold him to thy breast." Here the Queen, half frightened, exclaimed: "But where is the child? I don't see him. Where is he?" "Here, O mother," said the Swazi gravely, at the same time bringing forward a big black about six feet high and weighing sixteen stones, "he is here."

Here is another rather ludicrous incident that

occurred at Windsor. One day, about eleven years ago, the band on the slopes played some tune which attracted the attention of the Queen. She sent one of her attendants to ask the bandmaster the title of the piece. The man hesitated, and tried to evade giving a reply. "Oh," he said, "it is rather a popular tune just now." "Yes," said the attendant; "Her Majesty likes popular tunes. She must have an answer. What is it?" "Well," said the other reluctantly, "its name is 'Come where the booze is cheaper.'"

The rigid code of morality always insisted upon by the Queen in the case of all with whom she had to come into association is too well known to need mention, but two anecdotes may be given as bearing upon the subject. When Mr. Labouchere was excluded from the list of Ministers on the formation of the Liberal Government in 1892, he got it into his head that this was because the Queen entertained some objection to him. It was in vain Mr. Gladstone declared it was not so. Mr. Labouchere would have it that the gallant old Premier was only trying to shield the Sovereign. Mr. Gladstone, however, spoke only the truth. The Queen said at the time: "I never read *Truth*, and I have not troubled myself to consider Mr. Labouchere's position in connection with the Liberal Party. All I permitted myself to say to Mr. Gladstone was that I hoped the incidents of public life would never bring me into contact with ——" (mentioning some one whose moral character was not reputed to be of the best).

On another occasion the Queen, who was impatient of the ordinary evangelical phraseology, protested strongly when one of the Court ladies

said: "Oh, madam, how delightful it will be in heaven to see the prophets and saints of the past; to see Abraham and Moses and Elijah and David!" "No, no," said Her Majesty emphatically, "nobody will ever persuade me to know David."

One of the least courtly of Princes was the Duke of Edinburgh, afterwards Duke of Saxe-Coburg Gotha, with his plain, downright manner after the style of a gentleman of the old school. Supping one night with a company of actors and actresses (he had a passion, it is well known, for music and the drama), the Duke told a distinguished actor all about the theatre at Coburg. "I suppose, sir," said the actor, "that the house is subsidised by the State?" "Subsidised be hanged!" was the reply; "I pay every blessed sixpence out of my own pocket." The comical contrast between the formal courtesy of the player and the plain speaking of the reigning Grand Duke did not escape attention.

The Duke, although he was never a first-rate violinist, was sufficiently proficient to be able to play that instrument in an orchestra in public. He took a deep interest in the welfare of musical institutions. One night he was in a box at the Lyceum Theatre, and during an interval a fussy person entered, bowing and scraping and claiming acquaintance with him. The Duke was very angry, and got rid of his visitor as quickly as possible. During the next interval he made inquiries, and found the man was a rich alderman. "What! an alderman?" he said; "I'll get some money out of him for the College of Music. Go to him and say I should like a chat." The alderman returned, his face beaming with pride. "Oh, Alderman," said the Duke, "I didn't recognise you

before. So glad to see you. Fond of the theatre? Ah, and of music too, I'll be bound. I say, I want you to give me something for the College of Music. You are the very man who would appreciate that kind of thing." What was the poor alderman to do? By the time he left the grand ducal box he was a poorer man by a hundred pounds.

Literature was the hobby of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany. He took a great fancy to the novels of the late Mr. James Payn, for instance, and would invite the novelist to stay with him at Boyton Manor in Wiltshire and at Claremont. "The Prince," says Mr. Payn, "was a cordial and kindly host, and never could have been mistaken, even by the most cynical nature, for a patron." Mr. Payn, who in those days was a cheery, jovial wit with a boisterous laugh, greatly amused the Prince, although some of His Royal Highness's entourage were sometimes terribly shocked. One day, at the dinner-table, the host said to one of his guests: "Be sure you read the book; it is called *The Sceptre and Crown*. Shall you remember it?" "Think of a public-house," said Payn. Some of the Prince's suite looked severe at such unbecoming levity, but the Prince himself laughed heartily.

Poor Prince Leopold! He was born under some unlucky star. One evening the circle at Boyton discussed that oft-debated question, the relative happiness of different classes in society. Lord —, who was present, said his class were not the happiest; they were always wanting something they had not got; another title, a riband, a neighbouring estate. The balance of opinion

seemed to be in favour of the middle classes. "Your position, sir," said a guest to the Prince, "appears to be the fortunate one. You have all the consideration and influence that position can give and no responsibilities." "No," replied the Prince with a melancholy air, "I am worse off than any of you. You all have something which I want and shall never get." "To what do you allude, sir?" asked some one. "Health," was the reply.

A jovial if eccentric member of the Royal circle was the late Duke of Teck, one of the best-tempered creatures who ever lived. Although enjoying an ample provision according to most persons' notions, he did not, in his opinion, receive an income commensurate with his position in society, and would hold forth on the subject at any time on very small provocation, exaggerating his poverty in the most ludicrous manner for effect. Once he said: "I am the grandfather of the future King of England, and how much pocket-money do you think I have to last me for another month? Fourteen and eightpence; only think of it, fourteen and eightpence!"

Another eccentric member of the family was the late Count Gleichen, a cousin of Queen Victoria's, who dropped his title of Prince in order that he might not be compelled to take precedence of his wife, and also because etiquette and ceremony were abhorrent to his nature. He was a bluff, kind-hearted sailor. While he was a midshipman on board a man-of-war, his vessel put in at a settlement where there were English troops, and the commanding officer, a colonel, came on board, and, chatting with the captain, asked if

there was not a Prince on the ship, a relation of Her Majesty's. The captain, in a careless way, said that there was—he was a middy. The colonel said: "I should greatly like to be introduced to him," and added: "By the way, ought I to call him Your Highness in speaking to him or Your Serene Highness, or what?" "Well," said the captain, "*you* can call him what you like. *We* always call him 'Sausage,' because he's a German."

With regard to the two Jubilees of Queen Victoria, which were such magnificent successes, little can be said that has not been said already a hundred times. There is one aspect of these and similar celebrations, however, that is not familiar to everybody. Who chooses all the mottoes that are hung out in the streets on such occasions? A large contractor for illuminations declared in the course of a chat on the subject of his peculiar business that he had a man who was great in finding out the taste of the people in such matters. He went to Shakespeare for everything, without any real knowledge, but with something that answered his purpose just as well. If it was a City celebration, he would look in Mrs. Cowden Clarke's *Shakespeare Concordance* for "capon," "belly," "good cheer," and so forth, and his clients were always content. Sometimes the motto-seeker fell back on Latin, and his choice, however absurd, was invariably approved. The most ludicrous instance which the contractor remembered occurred on the occasion of the departure of some Royal personages. On a gorgeous banner were inscribed the words: "Exeunt Omnes."



## CHAPTER XII

The Civil War in America—English sympathy with the South—Mr. Gladstone's attitude—A crisis in Bouverie Street—The Lloyd Garrison breakfast—The Atlantic cable—Mr. Cyrus Field.

No foreign event in all probability, with the exception of the French Revolution, divided opinion in England so much at the time of its occurrence as the United States Civil War of forty years ago. Generally speaking, the ruling classes in this country were strongly in favour of the Southern slave-owners. They were such gentlemen, while the Northerners were such vulgar, upstart, shop-keeping fellows ! As for the slaves, well, they were far better off than millions of so-called free workers. Was it not obvious that it was to the master's interest to feed his slave well and to refrain from maiming or killing him ? A slave in sound bodily health could do valuable work, but starve him, or hack off his arms or legs and he was useless—worse than useless indeed, if he was kept alive, as the expense of his maintenance had to be considered.

People who reasoned like this, and there was really something in their reasoning, for it is well known that many and many a Southern planter was a just, considerate, and merciful man who ruled in patriarchal fashion over his slaves, made no allowance for cases which, though possibly exceptional,

were by no means rare. They were willing, it is true, to weep over Mrs. Beecher Stowe's Topsy and the too sentimental Eva, but when Mrs. Stowe published her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, wherein she gave chapter and verse for all the allegations in her indictment of the slave system, they resolutely refused even to look at it, and no book by a writer of world-wide reputation was ever in all probability so complete a failure.

Even Lord John Russell, whom one might have expected to sympathise with the anti-slavery cause, spoke coldly and sneeringly of the Northerners, and Mr. Gladstone, of whom the same remark might be more emphatically made, said little on the subject, but in the little that he did say contrived to give the impression that he favoured the South. In later years, it having been stated by a writer in the Press that Mr. Gladstone was a Southern sympathiser, the statesman challenged him to prove that this was so from any of his speeches. The journalist replied that Mr. Gladstone had prophesied the defeat of the North, and that this prophecy, unaccompanied by any qualifying explanation, might be legitimately construed as signifying that he wished the North to be defeated. What Mr. Gladstone said was that Jefferson Davis "had made an army, had made a navy, and had made a nation." But there were forces on the other side that were not to be despised. Some at least among the prominent men of the day, and notably the Duke of Argyll, Mr. John Bright, and Mr. John Stuart Mill, toiled nobly in the cause of slavery abolition, and they were supported by a few thoughtful organs of public opinion.

In London these publications were the *Daily*

*News*, the *Morning Star* (which was afterwards incorporated in the *Daily News*), the *Spectator*, and the *Westminster Review*, and no more enthusiastic abolitionist existed than the young journalist who was connected with the first-named paper. That wonderful woman, Miss Martineau, then a regular leading-article writer on the *Daily News*, had done something perhaps to influence his judgment, as that of others who used to look to her for political guidance. She had been in the Southern States herself, and had run some personal risk owing to the fact that she never concealed her opinion as to the iniquity of slavery. Rumours were rife of gigantic bribes of waggons laden with greenbacks, or American bank-notes, having been seen going down Bouverie Street, as similar rumours always will get current in times of political excitement, and abusive letters came by almost every post. Here is a specimen :—

SIR—You precious scoundrel! Do you think your villainies are unknown? Let me tell you that you will soon get your deserts. Everybody knows you are getting heaps of money from those scoundrelly Yankees. The nigger-hero Lincoln is tottering to his fall, and when that takes place you and your gang will be packed out of the country you disgrace.

This was a period of great anxiety for our young journalist, and his zealous advocacy of the Northern cause very nearly brought his journalistic career, temporarily at least, to a close. The *Daily News* had never been, financially speaking, a successful paper. Old Mr. Bradbury, of the firm of Bradbury, Evans, and Co., by whom it was started, declared that he could not bear to pass the office

and see the name painted up outside it. His firm had, he said, lost £200,000 over the venture. They afterwards parted with the property, and at the time of the Civil War in America the controlling interest was vested in a gentleman named Seymour, a stockbroker. Mr. Seymour took no interest whatever in political affairs. To him North and South were alike. He could not help seeing, however, that public opinion was against the North, and that this feeling had been strengthened by the notorious failures of the Northern leaders in the earlier stages of the war. His mind was made up. Henceforth the *Daily News* must shout with the bigger crowd.

The political editor of the *Daily News* at that time was a rather notable man, the late Mr. Thomas Walker, whom Mr. Gladstone afterwards appointed to the editorship of the *London Gazette*. Mr. Walker had risen from very poor circumstances. In his youth he was in danger of starving in the streets of London, when good fortune led him to the surgery of a medical man named Frederick Knight Hunt. The youth asked for employment. "I will do anything," he said; "I will sweep out the surgery, I will run on errands; only do please give me something to do." He had made many unsuccessful applications that day. Mr. Hunt liked the look of him, took him in, and found him useful in a variety of ways. That surgeon subsequently became sub-editor, then editor, of the *Daily News*, and he introduced his assistant to the paper. Mr. Walker was a rather austere man, of a profoundly religious turn of mind, who was never known to make a joke. He possessed a vast store of knowledge, and to this he

added a ripe judgment and a statesmanlike instinct which impressed Mr. Gladstone. Above all he was a man steadfast to principle.

The proprietor's pronunciamiento was discussed by the editor and manager. Both were still at that time poor men. But they did not hesitate. Rather than make public recantation on a subject they had so much at heart, they would go out into the wilderness. Then followed conferences with the proprietor of the paper, and lo! in the very midst of them came news of the battle of Gettysburg, which was the turning-point in the war. It was no longer possible to doubt that the North was determined to crush the rebellion. Waverers began to come over; sympathisers with the South abated a little the cocksureness of their language; the newspaper proprietor thought that after all he seemed likely to be on the winning side. Things went on therefore as before. The two journalists had to congratulate each other upon an exceedingly narrow escape.

The end came. The Southern Confederacy was broken up. The leader of the rebellion, Mr. Jefferson Davis, was a captive in the hands of his enemies. Henceforth the North had no lack of friends. At the famous breakfast at St. James's Hall in 1867 to Mr. Lloyd Garrison—once considered so extreme a man that even Englishmen, well disposed towards the North, when on a visit to the United States did not dare to visit him—Lord Russell was among those assembled to do him honour. Mr. Garrison did not spare him in his speech, and the little Earl had a look of wonderment (a little assumed it must have been) on his face as he sat with folded arms on the platform

and looked into the veteran abolitionist's eyes while the latter spoke of the feeling of disappointment in the United States at the course the noble lord and other prominent Englishmen had pursued.

Lord Russell in his speech spoke of the importance of promoting good feeling between ourselves and our cousins across the ocean, and owned that in this matter he had faults of his own to acknowledge. He had thought, until Mr. Adams (the extremely able American Minister here during those troubled times) had shown him the difficulties in the way, that the Northern States at the beginning of the rebellion should have proclaimed the abolition of slavery. Many other estimable people, there is no doubt, had felt as did Lord Russell. Mr. Lincoln's declaration that the North was fighting not to abolish slavery, but to maintain the Union, necessary as was that declaration if he was to uphold the constitution of his country, alienated the sympathies of many people who might otherwise have been friendly to his cause. It needed some amount of political insight to see what were the real issues in the great struggle. All credit to those who had eyes to see, and all honour to those who, having eyes to see, were prepared to make any sacrifice rather than surrender their principles!

Now the victory was won, they no longer felt lonely. The Rev. Dr. Vaughan, the editor of the *British Quarterly Review*, which had during the whole struggle ridiculed the supposed desire of the North to get rid of the cause of the war, that is to say, slavery, and which was particularly distinguished for the narrow spirit of national jealousy it had encouraged in all its articles on the

subject, actually went over to the United States on a mission of congratulation, while newspapers which sympathised with the Confederates as long as they had armies in the field suddenly turned round and, while Jefferson Davis's fate in the hands of his captors hung in the balance, counselled the United States Government to brave the opinion of the civilised world by putting him to death.

One English journalist at least knew the temper of the American people better than these scribes, and he wrote : " Impartial readers will remember the past and, bearing in mind the terms which up to this time have been allowed to prisoners of war, and the leniency, which not even the dreadful assassination of President Lincoln could disturb, exhibited to chiefs whose hostility to the North has been scarcely less effective than that of Mr. Davis, will await the result with comparative composure."

That journalist had again accurately forecast events. The North behaved with a noble forbearance and leniency in the hour of victory, and they have now their reward in a happy and united nation. The days of the Civil War were, as has been remarked by Mr. E. L. Godkin, who represented the *Daily News* in New York during that exciting period, the heroic age in America. In subsequent years Robinson always entertained a most friendly regard for the American people, although he could not help feeling grieved at certain tendencies in United States public affairs. More particularly he deplored the corruption that had sprung up in the New York municipality, and on one occasion this feeling led him into a rather awkward predicament. It was at lunch on board the telegraph ship *Monarch*, when carrying a party

of the Postmaster-General's friends on a short trip. The incident may be given in the diarist's own words :—

Oh, how unlucky I sometimes am in talking with strangers ! I sat next to a middle-aged lady whose first three words proclaimed her to be an American. Like nearly all her countrywomen she was bright and chatty. I praised her nation, and pleased her especially by my admiration of American women. There was one exception to these eulogies, and I told her I regretted there should be so much political corruption. There was the New York municipality. "Why," I added, "there could not be a more corrupt body in the world : all their places are bought and sold." She was silent, and I thought she did not hear me. I repeated what I had said. She then replied, rather coldly, that the best people in America would not meddle with politics and that that was the reason. I learned afterwards that she was the wife of —, one of the worst illustrations of American political jobbery.

It is curious to observe how much ill-will towards the North in the American Civil War was manifested by two great nations, England and France, and how each of those nations suffered inconvenience from it afterwards. In estimating the causes that led to the downfall of Louis Napoleon, the Mexican affair must always be taken into account, and, but for his unconcealed contempt for the North, he would never have got into the difficulty. When at length, order having been restored within its own dominions, the Government of the United States ordered the removal of the French troops from American soil, the humiliation to the French people was bitter, and the loss of popularity to the ruler who could submit to it, great.



Mr. John Bigelow, who was United States Minister in Paris at the time, said that one of Mr. Seward's messages to him on that critical occasion was so strongly worded that he communicated, and that unofficially, only a few passages to M. Drouyn de L'Huys. This, however, placed Mr. Bigelow a little later on in a delicate and difficult position ; for Mr. Seward gave a copy of the despatch to an American newspaper, and while the world was reading it, the *Moniteur*, the official organ of the empire, announced that it had not been communicated to the French Government.

In the case of England there is no doubt that if it had not been for the sympathy, open or unavowed, of our Government and the great majority of the ruling classes, the *Alabama* would never have been allowed to leave one of our ports on her errand of destruction. The result was that we narrowly escaped a long, costly, and exhausting war with our kinsmen, and had to pay some millions of pounds' compensation for the damage done by the privateer to their shipping.

While chatting one day at a friend's breakfast-table, Mr. Gladstone said that when the *Alabama* claims were the subject of diplomatic negotiations, a United States Senator wrote confidentially to the British Government offering, for a specified sum, to get the matter "squared." He would "lobby," as the Americans say ; that is, he would use all those arts by which men can be won over in private. Mr. Joaquin Miller, the American author, who was present, seemed very displeased that a Senator of his country should be put in so odious a light. He thought the letter must have been a hoax. At all events, he declared, if it really

was from a Senator, he would not have succeeded in doing what was promised.

The special interest which Robinson took in American affairs led him to follow with much curiosity and anxiety the attempts to connect the Old and New Worlds by a telegraphic cable, and he was brought into close personal communication with the men who took a prominent part in that magnificent achievement, great engineers like Thomson and Varley, Napoleons of administration like Glass, captains like Anderson, as well as some of the capitalists who are also deserving of public gratitude, for not every man would have put money into an undertaking so doubtful. Among those who did share the risk may be mentioned Thackeray, who said one day, with a merry look in his eye: "I have *sunk* a thousand pounds in the Atlantic cable."

Mr. Cyrus Field, a little man with a thin, smiling face, restless features, and a rapid, break-neck utterance, had much to do with the inception of the scheme, which he was indefatigable in promoting. He was an American type of the Wandering Jew. How many times he crossed the Atlantic it is impossible to say, but each time he came he went a round of all the newspaper offices. "Here's Cyrus Field again," busy journalists would say, "with his cable crotchet."

Field's tenacity, however, was wonderful, and he managed to get the Press on his side. "This is not an undertaking," he used to say, "for mere profit. Of course we shall have a right to a certain percentage on our outlay, but the thing is to get rapid and cheap communication between the two countries. I care for nothing else. I

want the British merchant to be able, for a few shillings, to hold daily intercourse with his American brethren ; I want the newspapers to get daily intelligence as though they were on the same continent, and I want to see the poor Irish emigrant able to satisfy himself of the welfare of those at home." But after the Atlantic cable became a success, Field rather altered his language. The business had nothing to do, he then declared, with sentiment, and it was he who fought most tenaciously to keep up the rates. The United States Congress passed a vote of thanks to Mr. Field in 1867, and struck a gold medal in honour of his achievement, although it certainly was not his alone.

A writer in *Punch* sarcastically said :—

This is quite right. *Punch* would be the last man to deny that alone Field did it. We are not quite sure whether he let the water into the space called the Atlantic Ocean, but we know that he invented electricity and telegraphy, and after years of solitary experiments perfected the cable now laid. He carried it in his one-horse gig from Greenwich to Ireland, and having previously constructed the machinery for paying it out, launched the *Great Eastern* by his unaided efforts, lifted the rope on board, and consigned it to the deep with his own hands. Therefore the medal is his. But in concession to the ignorant prejudices of the world, might not just the most modest space, say the rim, bear in faint letters the names of Gibson, Glass, Elliot, Anderson, Canning, and one or two more who stood by, with their hands in their pockets, and saw the smart Cyrus perform the herculean task ?

The rate for cabling was very heavy at first, the charge being £20 for a minimum of twenty words, instead of a shilling a word as at present. It is not

easy to recall now the time when one could not telegraph to America at any price, and one had to wait for a month or more for news from thence. Mr. Bayard, the distinguished American Minister to this country, told a story *à propos* of this, about the last battle fought between England and the United States in the war of the early part of last century. The engagement took place at New Orleans early in 1815, and all the while a treaty of peace between the two countries had been signed at Ghent, in Belgium, fourteen days previously. The lives of all the men who fell on that occasion would have been spared had there been an Atlantic cable.

## CHAPTER XIII

Americans in London—President Grant and his son—Mr. Tilden—  
Mr. John Bigelow—Mr. Sumner—Mr. Lowell—Mr. Motley—  
Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes—Senator Conkling—Mr. Bayard  
—Mark Twain—Artemus Ward—Mr. Bret Harte—Yankee  
exaggeration—Anecdotes.¶

As a result of the part he had played in guiding English opinion on American affairs, Robinson made one very distinguished friend, Professor Goldwin Smith, and the Professor secured his appointment as London correspondent to the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Boston Advertiser*. His letters, even after the Atlantic cable had been laid, were sent by mail, as they contained not so much news as lively accounts of the drift of public opinion and entertaining gossip on things and men English. The labour was thoroughly congenial to the writer, but, put on top of his other work, proved almost too much for him.

Being essentially a social man, however, he contrived occasionally to meet his friends, among whom, as an accredited representative of two leading organs of opinion in the United States, he soon added a number of distinguished Americans. He met one President, General Grant, and another statesman, Mr. Tilden, who, in the opinion of competent authorities, ought to have been President,

having been duly elected in opposition to Mr. Hayes, although his opponents contrived to rob him of the fruits of his victory by a doubtful manœuvre.

General Grant was of short stature. The eyes were small, and the mouth, as a rule, so tightly closed as to give him rather a fierce look of determination. On very rare occasions he would converse freely, but almost invariably his countenance wore an enigmatical look, and he was taciturnity itself. There was nothing distinguished-looking about him. His appearance was simply that of a fairly prosperous *bourgeois*. Some of his remarks when over here made his admirers regret that the silence had been broken at all. Mr. (afterwards Sir Edmund) Du Cane, the Director of Convict Prisons, talking to the General on the subject of English gaols, observed that it would be a pity if the ex-President should leave without seeing some of them. "I should like, General," he said, "to take you over some of our large prisons, and show you the working of our penal system." "Thank you, sir," replied the General, "I and my son went over the Tower this morning." This was to show that he had lost no time and had made a beginning.

General Grant's son, at that time a good-looking youth about twenty years of age, was by no means unlike the American who figures on the English stage. Robinson asked him what he thought of London. "Well," he said, "I don't like your architecture. I haven't seen a *pretty* building since I have been here." "Ah! Have you seen the House of Commons?" he was asked. "Yes," he said, "but I don't call that a pretty building." His interlocutor was getting rather nettled. "And

Westminster Abbey, I suppose you consider that quite a shabby place?" he inquired. "Well, was the reply, "I am a utility man, I am. I assure you, if that Abbey was in our country, and it stood in the way of any work of practical use, we'd have it down." He was reminded that a good many other Americans felt the greatest delight at seeing a venerable building with so many historical associations. But the young man was not impressed. "There now," was his reply, "I never *could* understand that. Why, I can pick up a stone anywhere that is older than any of your old buildings."

At Windsor, where he went with his father on a visit to Queen Victoria, it was remarked that he had a curious way of addressing Her Majesty as "Queen." As the son of an ex-President of the United States, he was resolute in maintaining what he considered the dignity of his position. Being placed at the lower table in the dining-room, he beckoned to an official and, pointing to the table where the Queen and his father were sitting, said: "If I don't sit at that table, I *quit*." The matter was satisfactorily arranged by one of the Court functionaries changing seats with him.

Mr. Tilden was on a visit to this country at about the same time as General Grant, but he was in a very bad state of health. He had had a shock of paralysis, and the effects gave him the appearance of a feeble, rather childish-looking old man. He was full of amiability, but his smile had rather a ghastly effect. He breakfasted with Lord Houghton, who never neglected an opportunity of welcoming to his house any distinguished visitor to these shores. Mr. Tilden, Mr. Bigelow, and Mr. Cyrus Field crossed the Atlantic together in the same

vessel, and before they got here, when the vessel touched at Queenstown, they all three received Lord Houghton's invitation to breakfast, by telegraph.

Mr. Bigelow has had very varied experience in the world. He represented his country in Paris at a time when the smallest indiscretion might have caused war between that country and France, and he has seen much of London society. He is a tall, well-made man, with an agreeable manner, and is an excellent conversationalist. He always speaks in high terms of the United States diplomatic service, with which he was so long connected. Referring to the appointment of Colonel Hoffman to the Secretaryship of the United States Embassy at St. Petersburg in the 'seventies, he observed that only in that service would gentlemen consent to be transferred from a good place of the first class to a second-rate post. Colonel Hoffman had served with efficiency at Paris and London, yet now he accepted St. Petersburg, which was of quite minor importance.

Mr. Bigelow's name gave rise once to a ludicrous blunder on the part of a Member of Parliament who rather poses as an oracle. The American diplomatist was entertaining a large party of friends at dinner at his club, and the Member of Parliament asked some one who he was. "Mr. Bigelow," was the reply. "Oh," said the member, "I know; the author of the *Biglow Papers*." He was like the old lady who, on meeting Mr. George Hogarth, Dickens's father-in-law, informed him that she admired his pictures, but that they were really too coarse.

Mr. Charles Sumner, who paid a visit to England



in 1872, had been in this country at the time of the coronation of Queen Victoria. He had had a ready access to English society, where he was a great favourite in his time; but in 1872 he found a great change had taken place. To his surprise he found people here regarded him as anti-English. They looked upon the learned Senator, rather unjustly, as the author of those celebrated "indirect claims" which Lord Chief-Justice Cockburn's brilliant pleading at Geneva had made more odious to English folk than before. It was rather strange that Mr. Sumner, in his conversation, appeared more thoroughly English in his ideas and tastes than any American who ever came over here, with the possible exception of Mr. James Russell Lowell, whom some one described after his return to the United States as the British representative in America.

At Mr. Lowell's residence in Lowndes Square used to assemble the most brilliant wits, the most intellectual writers of the two countries. He was a tall, striking-looking, handsome man, with a long grey beard split at the end into two separate tufts, which he persistently tugged with both hands. He was absolutely without personal vanity, an excellent talker, and as amiable as he was witty. His conversation, however, was polished and dignified, with a certain classical flavour unlike what one would be led to expect from the man who wrote—

'Tain't your eppyletts and feathers  
Make the thing a grain more right;  
'Tain't afollerin' your bell wethers  
Will excuse you in His sight;  
Ef you take a sword an' dror it,  
And go stick a feller thru,  
Guv'ment ain't to answer for it,  
God'll send the bill to you.

Mr. Lowell had travelled much and sojourned in many countries, and he said he was convinced that England possessed the very best climate in the world. It being suggested to him that some of his fellow-countrymen complained of the dampness of the air, he would not allow of this. He said that London was positively dry, and offered as evidence of this the fact that in London tobacco gets dry so rapidly. Numerous threats of destruction were received by him from members of Fenian organisations, and at the time of the dynamite scare in 1884, he had a cablegram from his Government urging him to keep a look-out, as it was believed there was a plot to blow up his official residence. Mr. Lowell said jestingly that perhaps the conspirators had come to the conclusion after all that his successor might be even less friendly to them than himself.

With another famous American Minister, Mr. J. L. Motley, who is chiefly remembered for his splendid history, *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, and a rather foolish epigram about not caring who had the necessaries of life so long as he had the luxuries, Robinson was on extremely friendly terms. Mr. Motley, who like himself was a Unitarian, but who rather kept aloof from the Unitarians as a body while in this country, never going to their places of worship, was a courtier in manners, and as much at home in Royal circles as among the literary celebrities of the day. He was a most agreeable talker, and at his hospitable house in Arlington Street there gathered many of the notabilities of his day. He was probably the first United States Minister who invited a negro to his official residence. This was the President of

the Liberian Republic, who attended the official reception of the Fourth of July 1870.

It was at Mr. Lowell's house that Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes met some of his numerous English admirers on the occasion of his visit to this country in the summer of 1886. The genial author of the *Autocrat at the Breakfast Table* was a sort of duodecimo edition of an author. He was barely more than five feet high. Although at the time of his visit he was over eighty years of age, nothing but his white hair betrayed his age. He had a merry eye, great quickness of apprehension, and an inexhaustible flow of spirits. He was full of fun and as nimble as a schoolboy. In short he was a delightful little man. In appearance he looked rather like a medical practitioner, which indeed he was before he ceased to give up to medicine what was meant for literature.

One of the stories he told during his visit was that in the first edition of an early poem he had used a particular phrase, which was severely condemned by some Lindley Murray of the day, one of those men who would confine language in iron stays, and make no allowance whatever for natural development. The critic was so much looked up to as a grammatical oracle that Holmes altered the passage. "And the new phrase was used," he said, "through the various editions ; but (here his eye twinkled) just before I left I restored my phrase, and there it will be for evermore." "But," he was asked, "what was your reason ? How came you to put it back ?" "He's *dead*, my dear sir," was the reply ; "he's dead. The grammarian is no more, and I am free."

Senator Conkling came over here with a great

reputation. Americans declared him to be one of the finest speakers living, and the fact that America has produced many fine orators among her statesmen and lawyers is beyond all question, in spite of Dickens's humorous sketch of Elijah Pogram. Somehow, however, Mr. Conkling proved a disappointment. He was said to be not only an orator but a brilliant talker, a really wonderful conversationalist. It was with great expectations therefore that Robinson went to meet him one day at a friend's house. But either Mr. Conkling was not in the vein, or report had spoken too highly of his social talents. He proved slow and heavy, and said nothing at all remarkable. "It was a ludicrous chance," says Robinson, "that led —— to pinch my arm as he stopped on his way down the room as Mr. Conkling was prosing to me about the adaptability of the American soil to the growth of the grape, and whisper, 'So glad to see you talking to Mr. Conkling, the Gladstone of America.' This is the severest thing said this year of the Hawarden hero."

An American orator who did not belie his reputation was Mr. Bayard, the United States Minister to this country. At social gatherings he towered over most other men like a giant, both as regards his stature and his eloquence. His stories were always appropriate and amusing. At the dinner at the Imperial Institute in the summer of 1894, in connection with the Eastern Telegraph Company, he delighted everybody with an anecdote of an American who, in extolling the merits of a particular diver, said: "He can dive deeper, remain under water longer, and (here he thought of something that should defy competition) *come up drier*

than any other diver in the world." On the same occasion he was very funny on the subject of Davy Jones's locker, which had once been regarded as the worst place in creation, whereas submarine telegraphy had shown that there was no place so secure, so snug, so free from peril.

Mark Twain's books (his friends of course always call him by his proper name, Clemens) give the notion of a man who is always joking. As a matter of fact he is, or was some ten years ago, a sad, slow, somewhat ponderous man. He spoke with a deliberation that was almost irritating. He was greatly interested in labour questions, and would tell in a deliberate, matter-of-fact way the story of the Knights of Labour and similar organisations in the United States. Of humour there was none in his conversation. Apparently he saved it all for his books. The loss of a fortune by the failure of a publishing house in which he was interested possibly had something to do with his grave and melancholy look at that time. How nobly he has since completed the parallel between himself and Sir Walter Scott, by working to pay off the indebtedness of the firm, is well known, having been told by himself in simple, pathetic, eloquent language. His hair some years ago was wild and bushy, his eyes had a kindly but plaintive expression.

In London he was the recipient of probably one of the greatest compliments that were ever paid to him. This consisted in the commotion among the waiters at a London club when word went round among them that Mark Twain was dining there. On some pretext or other every one of those waiters went up to the table at which he was sitting in order to have a look at him. Twain

recognised one of them, who was a German, and chatted with him. This was indeed fame. An author must be successful in no ordinary degree to arouse in our friends the waiters as much interest as if he were a good boxer, or a champion cricketer, or a crack billiard-player.

An American humorist of whom Robinson gained an unfavourable impression on the occasion of his coming over here to deliver a series of lectures was Mr. Browne, the famous Artemus Ward. Here is a sketch of him :—

I observed him closely, and it appeared to me that in his very humour he flattered the prejudices of his hearers. A man in his position may do much to render his country ridiculous. A phrase, a peculiar method of telling a story, a remark, half sneer, half fun, all are as effective as more open ways of attack. For example, Artemus Ward knew the contempt of the peculiar set among whom he moved for the negroes, and he never lost an opportunity of gratifying it. He went as far as he could towards justifying the traditional and peculiarly absurd conception of a Yankee, thereby raising a laugh against his countrymen. All this, however, I believe was rather from an absence of conviction than from deliberate intent.

With no American was Robinson more intimate than with Mr. Bret Harte, one of the best of friends and most genial of companions. He first met Harte at dinner at the house of Mr. Trübner, the publisher, in 1878. Here is a description of him at the time :—

His photograph led me to expect a smooth, refined face : I found, on the contrary, rough, beaten features, somewhat marred by smallpox. Although only thirty-eight years of age, he is perfectly grey. His long nose and tuft of hair spreading over the forehead rather

suggested a Jewish origin. His accent is American, his manner is easy and pleasing. The first impression soon wore off and I liked him immensely. We had much talk together and seemed to find a sympathy which was mutually agreeable. He gave me a sketch of his life : his mining work at fifteen ; his attempt to keep a school ; his acting as guard to the mail between the diggings and San Francisco ; and his afterwards settling down as a type-setter and editor. He assured me that there was not one of the characters introduced by him into his songs or stories who was without a counterpart in real life. He had known them all.

One capital story he told me was of a fellow named Walker, a weak, irresolute creature who had tried a score of things and had failed in all. At last he took to "the road," and tried to stop the mail. The driver, however, laughed at him and drove on. The next day Harte, who had been puzzled by the easy way the driver had treated the circumstance, said : "Underville, why on earth didn't you shoot Walker yesterday? You could have done it easily." "Well," said the driver, in perfect seriousness and without any thought of a joke, "you see the poor devil has failed in everything, and if I'd 'a shot him it would 'a *kinder discouraged him*."

Another guest was Mr. Leland, "Hans Breitmann," a pleasing-looking man with an imposing presence. He has a singularly loud voice and talked incessantly, but in spite of his reputation as a humorist, said nothing amusing. Harte, by the way, thinks Thomas Hardy the best living English novelist. He also said that when he first came to England he wanted to know Mr. George R. Sims more than Tennyson, or Browning, or Gladstone, or anybody.

That the man who wrote these words had much sympathy with the American people will have been clearly seen in what appears in this and the preceding chapter. That sympathy arose partly, no doubt, from a keen appreciation of their

humour. Above all, he delighted in that spirit of humorous exaggeration in which they excel. A good example is afforded by a story he told of an American couple who were staying over here and who complained of the smallness of the rooms in London flats. The husband, feeling that his description did not produce the effect desired, clenched the matter by saying : " Why, our dining-room is so small and the ceiling is so low, that we can never have anything to eat but *soles*."

Another American declared that a naturalist out West had discovered an animal that could only live on the slope of a hill. It was a quadruped, and the right front leg and the right hind leg were shorter than the left front and hind legs. It passed its days in going round a hill, and the only way in which the hunters could get at it was by so planning as to surprise it into turning suddenly round, when over it went.

One is so inclined to suspect Americans of exaggerating that occasionally one may be unjust to them. A waiter in New York declared that he had " eight acres of hotel " to look after, and this created some amusement. On inquiry, however, it was found that the waiter had spoken literal truth.

Their quaintness of expression is often delightful. An American, who was impatient at not being served promptly in a London restaurant, said : " Time is of no more value here than it is to a sitting hen ; " and a young journalist from New York, talking of a " big thing " in telegrams he was contemplating, declared that if he got it through it would be " a regular stem-winder," stem-winder being the American equivalent for



a keyless watch, *i.e.* the handiest sort of watch and therefore the best. Probably there is no popular saying in England that could not be rendered into the purest American. At a literary man's dinner-table one day, some one asked whether there was an American equivalent for a common slang expression descriptive of a conceited person: "he puts plenty of side on." "Yes," immediately replied a pretty young American woman who was present; "we say: 'Come off that roof.'"

Sometimes, but not often, an American's humour is of the unconscious description. Thus a farmer from the Far West went to have a tooth drawn under laughing gas at a New York dentist's, and before the operation put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a lot of coins. "Oh, never mind about that now," said the dentist; "you can pay me afterwards." "Well, it was not that I was thinking of," replied the patient, "but as I am going to be insensible I wanted to count my money first." And there was a delicious *naïveté* about a petitioner to Congress who (the story was vouched for by Sir W. H. Russell, the veteran war correspondent, just after his return from America) prayed that a stop might be put to the irreverent and irreligious proceeding of various citizens in drawing petroleum from the earth, thus checking the designs of the Almighty, who was storing it there for the future destruction of the world.

An amusing story illustrating the inquisitive character of a certain type of Yankee was told by Mr. Seaver, an American writer, when on a visit to this country in 1880. A lady dressed in deep mourning was sitting in a car, when a bustling, sharp-eyed traveller of the same sex took up a seat

directly opposite. Having stared for some time, curiosity gets the mastery and she says: "Lost your father, mum?" The lady shakes her head. "Your mother maybe?" Another shake of the head. "I guess it's a brother or sister?" Again a silent negative. "Is it your husband?" This time there is a nod in the affirmative. "Had he experienced religion, mum?" A quick nod, meaning yes. "Was his life insured?" Again yes. "Then, mum, you'll pardon me, but I really don't see you have anything to grieve about."

One more story from America, not because it illustrates American character in any way, but because it has reference to a subject often referred to by travellers in the United States. At a dinner party some one was speaking of the rudeness of railway guards and other officials on Transatlantic railways. An American present declared that there was much excuse for them in the fact that they were so pestered by ignorant emigrants and other people who asked question after question in the absurdest way. He illustrated this by a case in which a man asked a guard to be sure to tell him when they came to some insignificant town, say Mudville. The guard said "All right," but in spite of this the man would say about every half-hour: "Mister, are we at Mudville yet?" At length the place was reached, whereupon the guard said: "Here's Mudville, I'll stop the cars in a minute," and put his hand to the bell. "Don't do that," said the man; "I don't want you to stop the cars, I didn't want to get down; only my wife told me I was to be sure to take a pill when we got here."

## CHAPTER XIV

The Franco-German War—A new era in war correspondence—Origin of Reuter's Agency—Mr. Archibald Forbes—True story of his engagement—War correspondents and their work—Death of Forbes—Story of a Scottish war correspondent—A scientist on interesting news.

CHARLES DICKENS, the founder and original editor of the *Daily News*, died on the 9th of June 1870. At that time the paper to which he had given birth was by no means in a flourishing condition. The *Express*, the evening edition, was dead, and two years previously the price of the morning issue had been reduced by a new syndicate of proprietors to one penny. Mr. Labouchere, who had acquired a considerable share (the other large proprietors were Mr. Samuel Morley and Mr. Henry Oppenheim), declares that the paper had been doing so badly for years that the gentlemen who had owned it previous to the change, had come to regard an annual loss as the normal state of things as regards newspaper property. Even the reduction to the popular penny was not very successful in improving matters.

But a great change was close at hand, and the immediate cause was one of the most startling transformations in European affairs that have ever been witnessed. Never had the world seemed

more peaceful than on the day when the body of the great novelist was laid in its last resting-place in Westminster Abbey. As an eminent authority declared at about that time, there was "not a speck upon the political horizon." Less than a month afterwards the Hohenzollern affair cropped up, and in all the populous centres of the French empire crowds were marching through the streets amid fierce cries of "A Berlin!" "A Berlin!" The hour had come when from the journalistic point of view great things might be done, for a war between two great civilised countries so near our own shores naturally interested Englishmen almost as much as one in which their interests would be more directly concerned.

In 1870 the electric telegraph had long been in operation, the first cable connecting France with England having been successfully laid as long ago as 1851, yet telegraphic messages in the Press were still extremely meagre. Probably the same instinctive regard for economy which will lead even a rich man to abbreviate a message that has to be paid for at so much a word, induced the conductors of newspapers to content themselves with a brief mention of any important fact by telegraph, details following as a matter of course by the mail. It never occurred to any one of them that *letters* by telegraph from France or Germany, or some convenient neutral territory like Belgium, would hardly be more expensive than the old expresses on which such vast sums of money had been spent by the more enterprising journals in the pre-telegraph days. There was another reason perhaps for the want of enterprise shown by the newspapers of that period, and that was the fact

that they had come by degrees to rely almost exclusively upon Reuter's Agency for their foreign intelligence.

The origin of that agency was rather a curious one. Its founder, Mr. (afterwards Baron) Reuter, was a little German who had long had the idea in his mind of organising a supply of foreign news to be supplied in identical terms to all the newspapers. Fleet Street at first looked askance at the project. Managing editors were not anxious that the control of their news should be in private hands. Mr. Reuter was a most plausible man, but it was in vain that he broached his project in one office after another. He was not to be daunted. If he could not get any promises of support, he would begin operations without them. Accordingly he arranged with correspondents in all the principal capitals of Europe, and when his messages began to come in, he took them round to the newspapers and offered them for nothing, the only condition being that his name should be associated with them. "Try them," he said in his most insinuating way, "for vun month ; if they do not anserr, vy, it signify nothing." At last one paper tried them, then another, then a third, and so on until at length all were in the net and the little man danced about the City, his face full of glee.

After a time he again presented himself in the different offices in Fleet Street. "Do you like my messages?" he asked, and there was something of triumph in his tone. He was still very smiling, very friendly, very anxious to please, but he was no longer a humble suppliant for favours. Already he was almost master of the situation. On being assured that his messages were satisfactory, he came

to business. "Of course," he said, "you must know that the expense to me is very great. If I am to continue I must ask you for a *leetle* subscription." The demand was complied with, and gradually all telegrams, such as they were at that time (just after the Crimean War), were practically abandoned, and for many years from Reuter's office proceeded nearly all the messages from foreign countries that were given to the world.

Of course the money saving to the papers was great. Agencies were given up; the accounts of the telegraph companies dwindled down to a mere trifle, and newspaper proprietors found in a fuller exchequer consolation for the loss of prestige which they had to sustain under the new arrangement. The fact was that the newspapers had lost control of their sources of information so far as foreign countries were concerned, and although it must be admitted that the originator of the new system did his best to secure impartial news, that system put enormous power in the hands of correspondents, whose messages were beyond the wholesome influence of competition. By degrees Reuter put out his feelers in the provinces, to papers in our large towns and in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, and they were added to the list of his customers. Cabinet Ministers, foreign ambassadors, and stock-brokers also subscribed to his messages. Reuter, it may be added, did not have it all his own way. He once encouraged a dream of reducing the home news of the papers to the same dead level, but here he met with strenuous opposition and judiciously beat a retreat.

Such was the position in 1870 with regard to foreign intelligence, and when the shrewd manager

of the *Daily News* instructed his war correspondents before they started for the front to send their descriptions by telegraph, he had difficulty at first in getting them to grasp his meaning. "Oh yes, I know," they would say; "I will telegraph the facts at once before writing my account for the post." "No," said Robinson, "you will be sending news, and news by post is out of date. I do not want letters at all." It was a revolution in journalism and the turning-point in the fortunes of the *Daily News*. The circulation of that paper rapidly went up, and advertisements came in in largely increased numbers. From that time for many years the paper yielded a princely revenue to its proprietors.

All this of course could not have been effected if the man who planned his journalistic campaign had not been well supported by the men he chose for his purpose, and foremost among these was that wonderful man Archibald Forbes. At that time Forbes, although still very young, had had a varied career. He was the son of a Scottish preacher, and was intended for the ministry. At Aberdeen University, however, where he was put to pursue his studies, he became disgusted with a life of inaction and ran away and enlisted in the Dragoons. While in barracks in Dublin and elsewhere he began writing, chiefly on military subjects, for the magazines, and some of his articles being accepted, he earned at all events a little money to supplement his scanty soldier's pay. After five years' service in the ranks, he grew tired of the monotony of the routine of military life in time of peace, and as his contributions to the magazines had been favourably mentioned in

various quarters, he determined to give up soldiering and go in for journalism. He obtained his discharge, which was marked "good" by his commanding officer (a fact which he humorously attributed to that gallant soldier's kindness rather than to his sense of justice) and came to London, where he edited a little weekly paper called the *London Scotsman*, and did other journalistic work of a miscellaneous kind.

At the outbreak of the Franco-German War Forbes made his way to the German frontier on his own account, and sent some interesting letters by post to the *Morning Advertiser*, the editor of which, gladly no doubt, inserted them. One of these letters attracted the attention of the manager of the *Daily News*. He inquired the name of the writer, and was told he was a young man named Forbes, the author of a remarkable article in the *Saint Paul's Magazine* called "The Soldier's Wife," which was signed "A Private Dragoon." That article also had not escaped the vigilant eye of the manager, who had been so struck by it that he had made inquiries in the same way, and had been assured that the writer really was one of the rank and file. A little later, one day in September 1870, Robinson was seated in his office in the old ramshackle, tumble-down premises in Bouverie Street, when a messenger came up from the publishing department saying that some one named Archibald Forbes, who said he had just returned from Metz, was downstairs and wanted to arrange about writing an account of what he had seen in coming through the lines on his way home. What follows had better be given in Robinson's own words, as his account differs in some respects



from that of Forbes, published twenty years ago in the *English Illustrated Magazine*.

I said, "Show him up"; and when the messenger went out, I exclaimed (literally): "The Lord hath delivered thee into my hands." Presently in came a strongly knit, well-built man, firm of step, rather shabby and travel-stained, and with something of a look of defiance on his fine handsome face. He was not in the best of tempers, and said: "I don't understand London papers. I have been to two or three offices, and no one would see me or take any notice of my messages. They tell me to call again or write." While I listened I could hardly conceal my excitement and anticipation. I smiled, and said: "So much the better for me. I am delighted to make your acquaintance." He said he had just come from Metz, and that his connection with the *Morning Advertiser* was at an end. I begged him to write as much as he could for us of his recent experiences, and in order to make sure of him, gave him a private room to write in, and sent out for a steak and some beer for his refreshment.

The article thus written, which was dated from the different places he had passed through on his journey across the field of war, was of the greatest value at that time, and had all the well-known characteristics of his style—strength, clearness, avoidance of anything like writing for effect. The next morning he came again, and said he had seen the gentleman who had temporary charge just then of the editorial department of the paper, Mr. E. F. S. Pigott, and had arranged to write some letters defending the Germans from French charges of cruelty.

So far Mr. Forbes's narrative is perfectly correct, but his memory deceived him when he said that he bounced out of the room when I told him I did not want him to write the article about the Germans, and that I followed him downstairs into the street. He did not stir from his chair. When he spoke of the suggested articles, I said: "No, I think not. I don't think we will trouble you for them." "How do you mean?" he asked angrily; "I

agreed with the other gentleman to do them." "No," I replied, "I have something much better for you. I want you to go back for us to Metz."

He first said this was impossible, as he had the *London Scotsman* to look after. I pointed out that that paper must be a losing concern. He admitted that it was. "Well," I said, "if you will go out as our war correspondent I will give you £20 a week and pay all your expenses besides." He jumped up in astonishment and delight. "By George," he said, "I'll start to-night," and, putting his hand in his pocket, he pulled out a batch of dirty papers. "Look here," he said; "these are passes that will take me anywhere about the German lines." One of them was signed by Von Goeben, another, on behalf of the "Generalstab," by Podbielski. He agreed to meet me in the evening at the Reform Club, and I was to have ready for him £100 in French five-franc pieces. There was some trouble in getting these, but I did get them, and gave them to him in bags when I bid him good-bye.

I remember that he said to me at the club: "I have one great advantage over other correspondents. After a battle there is often much confusion, and one's horse is often missing, but, if need be, I can walk thirty or forty miles at a stretch, and I can get off my message while other men are searching for a conveyance." I recollect that afterwards I had some trouble with a person who had an interest in the *London Scotsman*, and who tried to make me pecuniarily responsible for the loss which Forbes's absence entailed upon him!

That same night the adventurous correspondent was on his way to those scenes of battle of which he gave almost matchless descriptions to the world. How he got into Paris during the siege and (an even more difficult feat) got out again, and crossed the Channel in a grimy and bloodstained condition after being attacked by a Paris mob; how he took the first news of the battle in the Shipka Pass to

the Czar at Gorny Studen ; his marvellous ride from Ulundi with the news of the defeat of Cetewayo—all these things are written in the history of his time, and will ever form part and parcel of the annals of journalistic enterprise.

Forbes's successes would not have been achieved without a rare combination of qualities. He himself used to say that only exceptional men were fitted for the life of a war correspondent. "There is So-and-so," he said ; "he is full of energy and as brave as a lion, but he is a poor writer and does not know how to convey what he has seen to the mind's eye of a reader ; and there is So-and-so, who writes a splendid descriptive style, but who is always dilly-dallying about in the rear, and knows nothing but what he can pick up here and there of what is going on at the front."

Then a correspondent must not only collect his news ; he must devise means for getting it through. In this branch of his art Forbes has never perhaps been equalled. To begin with, he had a splendid physique that enabled him to perform feats of endurance that would have killed other men. As field telegraphs are not for the use of correspondents, and as there is usually a rigid censorship over telegraphic messages sent from a country that is at war, his plan usually was to send his off from neutral territory. Often after being in the saddle all day where the fight was fiercest, he would ride all night to some place whence he could despatch his message.

In the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, after the first attack on Plevna, he had been chased by Bashi-Bazouks all one day, and at length, so wearied was his horse that the poor beast lay down by the

side of his master, laid his head on his knee, and slept without moving until an alarm took place. In the morning Forbes rode forty miles to Sistova, when his horse fell from exhaustion. From Sistova he went to Bucharest, and then rode on relays of ponies until he reached Cronstadt in Transylvania, where he wrote and despatched his brilliant account of the battle. He had been without sleep for three days. After the battle in the Shipka Pass in August, when he rode without a halt to the imperial headquarters, easily out-distancing the couriers charged to convey the news to the Czar, Forbes was explaining to His Imperial Majesty the disposition of the forces, at the same time drawing a rude illustrative diagram. The Czar said : "I presume, Mr. Forbes, you have been an officer of engineers." "No, Your Majesty," was the correspondent's reply ; "I was a private in the dragoons."

In the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral is a memorial of this extraordinary man. His devotion to the profession he had chosen was manifested to the last, when, worn out by a stealthy internal disease which more than one painful operation proved incapable of curing, he was a mere wreck of him who had performed such deeds of bravery and endurance. His old chief went to see him just before his death, but he was then delirious. Sitting up in his bed as Robinson entered his room, Forbes, with pale, emaciated face, and eyes staring wide open, called out : "Those guns, man ; don't you see those guns ? I tell you the brave fellows will be mowed down like grass." Presently he lay down and was calmer, but it was the calmness that betokened the end which was near. A day or two

more his adventurous career was over. "That incomparable Archibald," wrote Sir William Howard Russell, himself one of the greatest of war correspondents, on the occasion of Forbes's death, which took place in 1900, "he has left no one to equal him. I most sincerely regret him. Never was there a man more free from jealousy or bitterness. Perhaps he felt secure in his pride of place. The last time I saw him, he told me, as if he knew it would please me, that he always had my letters (from the Crimea) on his bed table and read them over and over again."

Forbes was a success as a lecturer, although on his first appearance on the platform the effect of his finest descriptions was marred by the interruptions of some one in the audience who was either tipsy or insane, and who would break out now and then into an ear-piercing laugh. There was a striking passage where the lecturer described the surrender of Napoleon III. to the Prussian king, of which he had been an eye-witness. "He, the Emperor of the French, the proudest monarch in Europe, kicking his heels on the roadside by a weaver's cottage while a Prussian count galloped to a Prussian king for instructions! If he were not too stunned to think at all, he must have thought at times as he lay there that surely the morning's doings were one ghastly dream." There was a pause, and amidst the cheers could be heard the maniacal laugh louder than ever. Forbes, whose impetuous spirit was roused, had to be restrained by his friends from doing personal violence to the interrupter when the lecture was over.

On that occasion Forbes, who was certainly the most decorated journalist who ever lived, wore

across his evening-dress coat, in a double row, no fewer than fourteen medals or crosses, including the Iron Cross of Prussia. Our own War Office refused him the ordinary service medal for the Zulu campaign, in which he had rendered valuable assistance to the military authorities as well as to his paper. During the Afghanistan expedition, however, in 1879-80, he was mentioned in despatches for performing rough but effectual surgical operations under a heavy fire on several wounded men in the absence of an army surgeon.

The great war correspondent was not wanting in humour, but his conversation as a rule was interesting rather than amusing. One story he used to tell concerned a correspondent who represented—and very ably represented—a Scottish newspaper in the Russo-Turkish War. The gentleman in question knew no language but the broadest Scots, and, previous to this campaign, had never seen a cannon fired, notwithstanding which disadvantages he contrived to pick up a very good notion of what was going on. At a time when difficulties with correspondents were at a height, a deputation from their body was appointed to wait on the Grand Duke Nicholas. As they were going in, Forbes, to his annoyance, noticed that his Scottish friend was writing in a note-book. “Do put that away,” he said; “can’t you carry what you want in your head?” “I hae juist thought,” said the other, “that I paid five francs yesterday for dinner which I didna put down.” The same correspondent, it appeared, had been hard put to it to get proper facilities, because the only letter of introduction he had was from the Duke of Argyll!

One of the greatest difficulties the newspapers had to contend with during the war of 1870 was the printing. Nowadays newspapers are printed on both sides simultaneously, at a marvellously rapid rate. The paper, many hundreds of yards in length, is in the form of reels and is unwound like cotton in a sewing machine, passing under rollers which are really stereotype plates shaped into the form of cylinders. In 1870 the paper was bought in reams, and as soon as a great pile of sheets had been run through the press, it had to be gathered up and turned upside down to be printed upon once more on the reverse side. To produce the required number the manager was at his wits' end.

One day, as he was cogitating upon the matter when going out to snatch a hasty lunch, he met in Fleet Street a very distinguished astronomer of his acquaintance. "I say, my dear fellow," said the man of science, "when are you going to give us some interesting news?" Robinson naturally took this to be a joke, but he found the other man was in earnest, whereupon he said: "Why, how many wars do you want? Isn't one enough?" "The war!" was the contemptuous reply. "No sensible person cares a brass button about the war. What people want is something good about the sun—the spots on the sun."

## CHAPTER XV

More about war correspondents—A great coup—Edmond O'Donovan  
—French Peasant Relief Fund—Mr. Labouchere as the Besieged  
Resident—The balloon post—The Bulgarian atrocities—Mr.  
MacGahan's report—Mr. F. D. Millet.

NOT all the good journalistic work was done by Forbes in that memorable year which Victor Hugo called the *année terrible*. Sir William Howard Russell was still to the fore, delighting readers of the *Times* with his vivid and graphic descriptions of the incidents of the campaign. One of the greatest coups of all, however, was made by a man of whom few people have ever heard. This was a brilliantly descriptive message from Metz giving an account of the surrender of Marshal Bazaine and his 173,000 men to the victorious Germans, a message that was copied from the *Daily News* into nearly every other paper in England. No other journal had the news. To whom was this great journalistic feat due? At the time it was generally attributed to Forbes, but the real author was a young American named Muller.

Muller was a correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, which paper, under a special arrangement, used to exchange messages with the *Daily News*. He entered Metz with the German troops, stayed



there for some hours gathering information, and then rode off to the nearest telegraph office, which was Esch in Luxemburg, and thence telegraphed his narrative to London. From that day to this nothing has been heard of him. Doubtless he was shot by a stray bullet as he endeavoured to get back within the German lines. It is all part of the price that has to be paid if the public palate is to be tickled with piquant descriptions of battles almost ere the smoke has cleared away. How many war correspondents have died, as it were, on the field of glory since war correspondence first became a recognised pursuit? One thing is certain: they run more risks than soldiers. The soldier is wherever he happens to be stationed by his superiors; he may even go through a whole campaign without seeing so much as a skirmish. The war correspondent must ever be at the front. "For goodness' sake, my dear Forbes," wrote Robinson on one occasion, "keep away from those 'shell-swept slopes.'" But the correspondent cannot steer clear of danger unless he wishes to be hopelessly beaten by his rivals.

Other war correspondents with whom Robinson was associated at different times were Mr. Hilary Skinner, one of the most voluble talkers who ever lived, who did good work in the Danish War of 1866 and the Franco-German War; Mr. J. A. MacGahan and Mr. F. D. Millet, of whom more will be said *à propos* of the events in the East in 1876-77; Mr. Edmond O'Donovan, Mr. John Macdonald, Mr. H. H. S. Pearse, and Mr. A. G. Hales, whose description of the battle of Magersfontein and the funeral of General Wauchope in

the great Boer War, was worthy to rank with the work of Archibald Forbes.

Of this group of men the most remarkable perhaps was O'Donovan. He was the son of a Professor at Trinity College, Dublin, and was a highly educated and gifted man, but an incurable Bohemian. He once likened himself, while living in London, to "a Red Indian in patent leather boots." He hated the conventionality of our life, he said, and was never so happy as when he was starting off on an expedition to some hitherto unexplored land. It was he who visited Merv, the "roof of the world," and became the chief of the triumvirate of rulers of that place, in virtue of which office he had a gold ring with a cabalistic inscription upon it. The people would not let him go, and it was only by the adroit diplomacy of Lord Granville that he was restored, much, no doubt, to his secret disgust, to the civilisation he abhorred. He was killed, as is well known, when accompanying that ill-fated expedition to the Soudan wherein General Hicks's army was annihilated. That O'Donovan was aware of the grave peril he was in, was shown by the last private letter he wrote, but there was no thought of turning back.

The letter was dated from El Duem, on the White Nile, September 23, 1883, and in it he said :—

I am writing this under circumstances which bring me almost as near to death as it is possible to be without being under absolute sentence of execution or in the throes of some deadly malady. However, to die out here, with a lance-head as big as a shovel through me, will meet my views better than the slow, gradual sinking

into the grave which is the lot of so many. You must know that here we are fifteen hundred miles away south of Cairo, in the midst of a wild, almost unexplored country. The Egyptian army, with which I am here camped on the banks of the Nile, will have but one chance given them—one tremendous pitched battle. The enemy we have to meet are as courageous and fierce as the Zulus, and much better armed, and our army is that which ran away before a handful of British troops at Tel-el-Kebir.

How accurate this melancholy forecast proved to be it is unnecessary to point out.

To return to the war of 1870, Robinson, while working with might and main in the interests of his paper, was not unmindful that there is another aspect of war besides journalistic advantages to be got out of it. Soon after hostilities broke out, a cry for help came from the villages along the line of march of the German invader in North-Eastern France. The terrified villagers fled from their homes, taking refuge across the frontier in Belgium. A description from the pen of Mr. Hilary Skinner of the sad plight of these poor people, thousands of whom were literally starving, induced the manager of the *Daily News* to start what was called the French Peasant Relief Fund, and ere it was closed nearly £22,000 had been received. One day, just as the proportions of the fund were beginning to appear, and the best course to pursue was a cause of anxiety, a visitor was announced. His name was one in every way entitled to respect. It was that of a man who had won high honours at Oxford. It was well known to the group of brave Poles who made so gallant and hopeless a struggle in 1864, and to the Italian liberator Garibaldi, as

that of a companion in more than one of his daring exploits. This visitor, Mr. W. H. Bullock, afterwards Mr. Bullock Hall, had seen the notices of the fund. Could he be of any service? His offer was eagerly welcomed, and presently other willing helpers, including Commodore Goodenough and Captain St. John Mildmay, undertook, entirely at their own expense, to distribute necessities to the sufferers. "Without you we should have starved." This and similar messages came from many mayors of villages and communes in the districts ravaged by the operations of war. There was no political partisanship to taint the pure fountain of charity which sprang up in England in answer to the cry of the French peasantry. The funds collected were simply applied to the relief of non-combatants who had suffered from the presence of the contending armies, not one shilling being deducted for expenses.

One of the most fascinating volumes of war correspondence ever published is by a man who never accompanied an army in the field, and who does not profess to know the ABC of military strategy or tactics. This is the *Diary of the Besieged Resident* of Mr. Henry Labouchere, a reprint of his contributions to the *Daily News* during the siege of Paris. Mr. Labouchere, as we have seen, was a proprietor of the paper, and he happened to be in Paris just before the all-conquering onward march of the German armies made it necessary to declare that city in a state of siege. One circumstance which decided him, it appears, to remain, was the prospect of being shut up somewhere where no letters could reach him. But it also occurred to him that it would be worth while to describe the

everyday life of a besieged city from the point of view of an ordinary peaceful citizen. It was no business of his to tell what General Vinoy or General Trochu was doing, or whether a sortie would succeed or the thunder of Fort Valérien be silenced by the enemy. His mission was to say how people behaved, what they ate, what they talked about, how they amused themselves, while the enemy was at their gates striving to get in. One historic event he described, and that was the capture of the Tuileries by the mob and the establishment of the Republic under a provisional government. He followed the crowd who invaded the palace, whence the flag had just been pulled down in token that the panic-stricken Empress had fled, and he wandered at will with thousands of others through the rooms. At length he left the people there, and always wondered afterwards how they were induced to depart.

It was in his descriptions of everyday life in the beleaguered city, however, that the writer excelled, and he brings all the force of his sardonic, mordant humour to his sketches of the amiable but — in moments of excitement — too theatrical Parisians. His letters were written on tissue-paper, and sent off by balloon (*Par ballon monté*), bearing on the envelopes, also of tissue paper, stamps, some with the Emperor's head on them, others with the new conventional head of the Republic. He was singularly successful in getting them through. It appears that Jules Favre was approached by the correspondents in a body, who wanted him to grant them special facilities for the transmission of their communications to their papers, and the French statesman agreed, although

there was a smile on his face which seemed to indicate that they would not be allowed to go through if they contained anything that was disapproved of by the men who had seized the government. So Mr. Labouchere addressed his letters, not to the paper they were to appear in, but to Miss Hodson, a popular and pleasing actress who was then playing at the Queen's Theatre, and who is now Mrs. Labouchere. He reckoned, he said, that as each balloon took out about 20,000 letters, those posted in the ordinary way to a private individual were not likely to be tampered with.

One of the most curious things about these letters by balloon was the irregularity in their delivery. It was not merely that one balloon reached friendly or neutral territory in safety while another did not. Of half-a-dozen letters coming by the same balloon, two would be delivered, say, on the 6th of the month, one on the 10th, two on the 15th, and the last on the 30th. This greatly puzzled the recipients at the time. The explanation turned out to be that the bag containing the first letter had been sent off immediately the aëronaut descended, whereas the others underwent a variety of adventures. Frequently a balloon fell at or near a place in German occupation. The aëronaut would come down with a run, hurry off with one bag and give the others to friendly peasants, who secreted them until an opportunity occurred for getting them safely to the nearest post-town. Usually the letters came in beautiful order, without a speck upon them to show an unusual mode of transit. One batch, however, had to be fished out of the sea off the Cornish

coast. In one case a letter was delivered in wonderfully quick time. Despatched from Paris on a Monday night, it was delivered in London on the following evening.

Less than six years elapsed, and Europe was on the eve of another devastating war. This time the *Daily News* not only kept public opinion informed, but had much to do, as Mr. Gladstone afterwards pointed out, in moulding events. On the 23rd of June 1876 a letter appeared from its correspondent at Constantinople, Mr. Edwin Pears, and this is how it began:—

Dark rumours have been whispered about Constantinople during the last month, of horrible atrocities committed in Bulgaria. The local newspapers have given mysterious hints about correspondence from the interior which they have been obliged to suppress. I have hitherto refrained from mentioning these rumours, or from stating what I have heard, but they are now gradually assuming definiteness and consistency, and cruelties are being revealed which place those committed in Herzegovina and Bosnia altogether in the background.

The same correspondent stated that it was currently alleged that thirty-four villages had been destroyed, that a crowd of Bulgarian girls had been burned alive, and that other girls had been slaughtered in a village school. Then followed further letters, until the whole sickening story was told. No useful purpose would now be served in going over the terrible details, but the agitation to which those letters gave rise have a direct bearing upon the subject of this volume. The allegations were denied by the Turkish Government, to whom one denial more or less is never of the least conse-

quence, and Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli pinned their faith to the denial. Mr. Disraeli was even facetious. It was all coffee-house babble, the hare-brained chatter of irresponsible frivolity. The Oriental races did not resort to torture; they had a more expeditious way of severing their connection with their captives.

A strong feeling sprang up in favour of the Turks. The Constantinople correspondent and his employers were stigmatised as "atrocities-mongers," and "Bulgarian atrocities" became a term of contempt and derision. Even opponents of the Government—men of that weak, timid class, who dearly love a half-and-half opinion—thought that the accounts had been grossly exaggerated. In order to understand the general reluctance to put faith in the charges, it is necessary to remember that the traditional policy of England had long been to maintain at all costs the existing status of the Ottoman Empire, which was supposed to be necessary to what was vaguely called the balance of power in Europe. It is an ancient observation that people like to believe what they want to believe. They disbelieve, therefore, that which it is inconvenient to admit. Now, how in the face of these revelations, supposing them to be true, could England go on supporting Turkish rule in the Christian provinces in Turkey? What sane person would acquiesce in a system under which the wolf was made shepherd? Therefore the allegations against the Turks were strenuously denied, and those who gave currency to them were attacked with the utmost virulence.

Robinson was not the man to be deterred by the fact that a majority seemed to be against him.



He had been in minorities before, and had found in more than one instance that minorities had a knack of becoming swollen into majorities. He had faith in Mr. Pears, and he would see that he was vindicated. At all events, it was due to the world that charges so passionately denied should be either substantiated or withdrawn. Mr. Pears's professional engagement in Constantinople, where he practised as a lawyer, would not permit him to leave that city, but there happened to be on the spot an able American journalist, Mr. J. A. MacGahan, who had been through the Franco-German War for a New York paper, and had distinguished himself by his memorable ride of 600 miles through a desolate waste to witness the Russian assault on Khiva. Robinson telegraphed to him, and he agreed to start out at once for Bulgaria. Accompanying him was Mr. Eugene Schuyler, the American Consul-General for Turkey.

The expedition was one of considerable difficulty and danger. The country was infested with the irregular troops known as Bashi-Bazouks, by whom the outrages had been committed, and that the Turkish Government were determined to prevent, if possible, the truth becoming known to the world, was only too clear. However, the two men succeeded in securing the very best evidence—that of their own eyes—of the truth of the accusations. There had been no exaggeration; in fact, the opposite was the case. The effect produced by MacGahan's letters, calm, temperate, impartial, but stating facts—and such facts!—was immediate. Even the Government had to surrender. There was no more talk of coffee-house babble. Mr. Robert Bourke, afterwards Lord Connemara, was

at that time Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and he got up in the House of Commons and admitted that he and his colleagues had had no idea of what had been going on, and that the Government and the country were very much indebted to the newspaper correspondents through whom these events had become known.

The revelation of those scenes of butchery and outrage changed the face of European politics. When Russia declared war in order to deliver her kindred in the Christian provinces groaning under Turkish misrule, it was not possible for any civilised power, no matter what its theories as to the balance of power or what its hatred of the Muscovite, to stand up in defence of the Turk. In that campaign Mr. MacGahan wrote many brilliant descriptions of the varying fortunes of the opposing forces. Such was his indomitable pluck that, although he broke his ankle early in the war by falling from his horse, he did not give in, but afterwards rode to the scene of operations on a gun-carriage. He was at San Stefano when the preliminary treaty of peace was signed. The event he had done so much to bring about—the delivery of Bulgaria from her cruel oppressors—was practically realised. He did not, however, live to see that treaty, with certain modifications, ratified by the Powers of Europe. At San Stefano a friend fell sick of fever, and while nursing him MacGahan contracted the disease and died of it.

MacGahan's body was buried at Scutari, on the banks of the Bosphorus, but six years later the people of Ohio, where he was born, had his ashes taken over to America and laid to rest in his native soil. A statue of this kindly and courageous man

now adorns one of the public places of Sofia, Bulgaria's capital. He was only thirty-four years of age at the date of his death.

Another distinguished colleague of Forbes and MacGahan in the Russo-Turkish War was Mr. Frank Millet, still happily living. Mr. Forbes used to say that of all the men he had ever worked with, Millet was the ablest. "I have seen him writing the most magnificent descriptions in the Balkans," said Forbes, "when the thermometer was below zero, and he had to put his ink-bottle between his legs to thaw the ink." Here is an extract from one of Mr. Millet's private letters from the front in 1877 :—

I hope you thoroughly understand the difficulties of the campaign. It is now (September) no longer possible to make the same time we used to in the summer. The roads are almost impassable, and the horses (and their riders too) get nothing to eat. The story of the despatch I sent off to-day is likely to be repeated. I rode with it two nights and one day, and then could get no carriage to take me to Giurgevo on account of the storm.

That observation in parenthesis about "the riders too," is a characteristic little touch. Being a true "special correspondent," his own comfort, or even the bare means of subsistence for himself, seems to be thought of so little importance that reference to it is put in as an after-thought.

Mr. Millet, whose accounts of his journey over the Balkans attracted wide attention on account of their vigour and picturesque qualities, soon afterwards abandoned journalism for art, and became President of the Academy of New York. Of late years he has lived much in England.

## CHAPTER XVI

Early journalistic friends—Douglas Jerrold—His supposed attack on the Prince Consort—Jerrold's plays—Miss Harriet Martineau—Mr. Gladstone's offer of a pension refused—Miss Martineau at home—Her death.

DOUGLAS JERROLD, to whom Robinson owed his introduction to Fleet Street, and with whom he lived on terms of friendship for years, was, like Sydney Smith, a professed wit, and, like Sydney Smith, his reputation has suffered somewhat from the fact that jokes of all kinds, witty or commonplace, genial or the reverse, have been fathered upon him. Thackeray described Jerrold as "that ferocious little Robespierre," but this was purely in a political, that is to say, a Pickwickian sense. In reality he was one of the cheeriest, kindest of men. Even his political views would not be considered so very extreme in these days. His series of sketches called *Punch's Lives of Eminent Scoundrels* (No. 1, Alexander the Great; No. 2, Julius Cæsar) sufficiently indicate his habit of mind in treating of public affairs. One of his great offences was the writing of an article that was supposed to reflect upon the Prince Consort. It was really nothing of the kind, but an attack upon the Rev. Hugh M'Neile for having, in a sermon delivered at St. Jude's, Liverpool, likened

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the visit of the Prince to the second coming of Christ.

“Some time ago,” said Jerrold, “a gentleman passing down Holywell Street shattered the window of a bookseller. The tradesman had exhibited a print, in the gentleman’s opinion, offensive to the moral sense of a Christian, and for the fault the tradesman’s property was destroyed, and himself, seeking a remedy at Bow Street, sternly rebuked by the magistrate. Recollecting this, we are fain to ask, are Messrs. Hatchard of Piccadilly, in whose windows M’Neile’s sermon is exhibited, quite safe from the vengeance of the same gentleman, should he approach them? Is indecency less indecent as it proceeds westward?”

After pointing out that even the husband of a queen is not devoid of human frailties, he adds:—

We learn from the title-page of this most melancholy, most wretched, and most degrading composition, that it has been published by desire for the Liverpool Sailors’ Home. Year after year a society pours out missionaries to teach the foreign heathen a knowledge of the true Christ. Surely the congregation of St. Jude’s needs some such spiritual teachers lest, deeply impressed and darkened by the eloquence of Mr. M’Neile, they should continually confound the holy attributes of the Saviour of the world with the graceful qualities of Prince Albert, the Court Circular with the New Testament. Such sermons as these are so much dry-rot in the rafters of the Established Church. As that church is established, we know it is impossible to keep from discoursing in its pulpits the rash and the foolish. This is a pity. King Solomon, we learn, had apes brought from Ophir; but we are not told that the animals were suffered to run riot about the Temple.

This is very severe, no doubt, but is there

anything in it to which the Prince Consort, who was a man of sense, might not have subscribed? Well might the Prince have prayed to be saved from his friends.

In his day Jerrold was one of the most popular dramatists. Nowadays his plays, with one exception, are practically forgotten. That exception is the nautical drama *Black-Eyed Susan*, a crude, bombastic work of his youthful days, which owes its popularity to the ingenious idea that forms the basis of the plot, that of a poor sailor who strikes his captain in a fit of uncontrollable rage at seeing his wife insulted by that officer, and is sentenced to death for the offence against discipline. How often *Black-Eyed Susan* has been played it would be impossible for any one to say. There is a belief that in travelling companies, at least until quite recently, there was not an actor who did not know it by heart. It is said that on one occasion a young actor, having to play the part of the hero, was seized with stage fright, and in the scene of the court-martial was unable to utter a word. The President of the court, seeing how things stood, found a brilliant way out of the difficulty. "We know, William," he said, "what it is you would tell us were it not that emotion checks your utterance. You would say that you heard your wife Susan giving signals of distress, you found her battling with a pirate. You cut him down like an old junk, and, had he been the First Lord of the Admiralty, d— you, you would have done it the same."

The present generation, who only know Jerrold the dramatist by that youthful production, are not aware how much wit and humour are to be found

in his comedies. One of the best of them is the *Prisoner of War*, in which Keeley, the joyous, moon-faced Keeley, made so great a success as a boastful Englishman, one Peter Pall Mall, in France. "As a sailor," he says to a nautical personage, "isn't it your duty to die for your country?" "Most certainly," is the reply. "Very well," says Pall Mall, "as a civilian it is mine to lie for her. Courage isn't confined to fighting. No, no; whenever a Frenchman throws me down a lie, for the honour of England I always trump it." In another scene Pall Mall is in a French café, and the subject of taxes in France is mentioned.

*Pall Mall*.—All comes of being born in France. Should live in England.

*Babette*.—What! Have you no taxes in England?

*Pall Mall*.—We haven't the word in our language.

The perfect gravity and sententiousness with which Keeley uttered these words, and the audacious, inconceivable assertion they contained, had a magical effect upon the house the first night of the performance. The audience were taken with astonishment, and then, after a second's pause, gave way to peals of laughter, while Keeley went on: "There are two or three duties, to be sure, but then with us duties are pleasures. As for taxes, you'd make an Englishman stare only to mention such things." "Ha, ha, charming," says a Frenchman. "Zen wizout taxes how do you keep up ze Government?" "Keep it up?" said Keeley, or rather Peter Pall Mall, "why, like an hour-glass; when one side's quite run out we turn it up the other and go on again."

Later on Pall Mall is discovered in a French

prison, and he thus explains how he came there : " A little altercation at the Café Impérial. The talk ran upon omelettes ; an impudent Frenchman insisted we couldn't make them. In the first place, he aspersed our eggs as being small. I replied our eggs were as big as pumpkins. This failed to silence him, for he swore that some of the hens in his country laid three times a day. This wouldn't do at all, so for the honour of the old country I made our hens lay four times, with chickens in 'em." " And was the gentleman convinced ? " he is asked. " No, sir," is the reply ; " he made a strong reflection upon my veracity, to which I replied by knocking him down. Now, in France, when you knock a man down, you knock a gendarme up ; so there was a brief inquiry, and here I am."

Of the colleagues with whom Robinson was brought into relationship when he first took up his position in the *Daily News* office in Bouverie Street (the old office which occupied part of the site of the present *Punch* building) none attracted him more forcibly or influenced his mind more deeply than Harriet Martineau. For her he had the greatest admiration, but it was admiration at a distance, as she lived more than 250 miles away, and seldom or never came to London. Many years before, Lord Brougham had said : " There is a deaf girl at Norwich doing more good than any man in the country." That deaf girl was the singularly gifted authoress of the *Illustrations of Political Economy*, which, written in her youth, yet displays wonderful depth of thought allied with considerable imaginative power. Miss Lucy Aikin, writing so long ago as in 1831, said :—



Last year she (Miss Martineau) called upon me several times, and I was struck with marks of such energy and resolution in her as I thought must command success in some line or other, though it did not then appear in what. She has a vast store of knowledge on many deep and difficult subjects, a wonderful store for a person scarcely thirty, and her observation of common things is extraordinarily correct as well as rapid.

“There is no God and Harriet Martineau is his prophet.” This is doubtless one of the numerous apocryphal sayings of Douglas Jerrold. In reality the authoress, although far from orthodox in matters of religion, was not open to the imputation therein conveyed. In conversation her language was certainly not that of a woman who disbelieved the existence of God, and Harriet Martineau was one of the last persons who would have been suspected by those who knew her of giving utterance to opinions which she did not honestly entertain.

In a sense she was of a deeply religious disposition, with a strong feeling of man's responsibility to a higher power. All her life she seemed to be drawn towards the Quakers, with their views of the freedom of the ministry, peace, and abstinence from ordinances, although she lamented the extinction of their intellects with regard to religious subjects by their worship of the letter and not the spirit of the Gospel.

But whatever her views on any subject, whether popular or unpopular, she never hesitated to express them, however much she might by so doing forfeit the esteem of friends or injure her reputation as an authoress who earned her bread by her

writings. The conduct of her brother, Dr. James Martineau, in stirring up the *odium theologicum* against her (he being a Unitarian and therefore himself extremely heterodox), was the one blot upon an otherwise blameless career. She valued her brother's good opinion, but she valued truth still more, and for the sake of truth as she saw it she was willing to suffer an estrangement that cost her dearly.

Her leading articles attracted much attention, as did a series of letters she wrote descriptive of a tour of inquiry in Ireland, specially undertaken for her paper. The late Mr. W. E. Forster has done justice to the part she played with regard to the great struggle for freedom in America. "It was Harriet Martineau alone," he said, "who kept public opinion on the right side."

Miss Martineau's biographical sketches in the *Daily News*, afterwards published in a volume, were greatly admired. One day a clever lady journalist applied to the editor of another London paper for literary employment, saying: "What I should like to do would be to write articles like those of Harriet Martineau." That editor smiled. He knew the articles in question. "It is what we should all like to do," he said, "but unfortunately there is only one Miss Martineau." The great success which attended the republication of the biographical sketches was a source of much gratification to her. When the suggestion that they should be republished was first made, she hesitated, and the doubts she felt were strengthened by the fact that one publisher refused them. Eventually they passed through a number of editions. "I certainly," she said, "did not anti-

cipate anything like the favour with which the book has been received. I thought it might be popular because in a way amusing, but the respectful, kindly tone of the critics has taken me quite by surprise."

Prefaces were her aversion, though in two or three instances she yielded to the advice of others who thought a reprint would be the better for one. It was her opinion that a book written with due clearness and finish ought not to need any introduction ; she even said it seemed to her at once an impertinence to others and a forfeiture of dignity for an author to explain his aim and meaning. To the newspaper reader who supposed that the sketches were written instantly on the news of the death of the subjects of them, some of the criticisms they contained occasionally appeared inconsiderate, if not downright unsympathetic and harsh, and to this the writer was fully alive. She was wont to say that it was most difficult to remember in the act of writing, often long in advance, that one was saying what would be read not as a review of a living person's work, but in the first emotions caused by his death ; but she held to her criticisms and would not plead guilty further than this. She would always insist on the principle of thorough sincerity in the portraiture of public men.

Curiously enough, in one so methodical as she was, she would often forget how long a particular memoir had been written, and in one case, that of Sir Edwin Landseer, she was altogether unaware, when she saw it in print, that it was her own. She laughed heartily as she remembered, after the discovery, that she had admired it and had wondered who wrote it. Many of the subjects

of her sketches survived her. To this day her memoir of her old friend the revered Miss Florence Nightingale, still happily living, has not yet appeared.

As Miss Martineau's fame spread, all sorts of stories about her got into print. "I am always hearing," she said to Robinson on the occasion of one of his visits to her at her north-country retreat, "of ladies who claim to have been my schoolfellows at all manner of schools, whereas I never was at school in my life." She was particularly annoyed on the appearance of the third volume of Lord Brougham's *Autobiography* in 1871 at some statements therein about her family. "I never do notice untrue statements in print which concern myself only," she declared; "but my father did not fail in business, and my mother did not depend on me for support beyond receiving—quite properly—liberal pay for my board and lodging. I did pay my very poor expenses for two years by fancy work, but nobody shared it, either more or less. My father, though losing heavily by the panic of 1825-26, never failed."

It is strange that one who disliked publicity should have given so much occupation to the gossips of her day. Her letter to Lord Melbourne, declining a pension from the Civil List when she was young and poor, somehow, she knew not how, got into print, much to her annoyance. Then Mrs. Grote, in her life of her husband, published a letter of condolence, written on the latter's death, by Harriet Martineau, and in it the writer spoke of this suffering life, and said that for herself she longed more and more for the close of it. This was particularly annoying to her, for the sentiment

simply represented a passing thought, a mere invalid's mood. However, the publication led to that rather remarkable event, her third refusal of a pension from Government. Three Prime Ministers in fact, Lord Grey, Lord Melbourne, and Mr. Gladstone, offered to honour her for her services to literature in this particular manner.

In 1873 Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone spent the Whitsuntide at Chatsworth, they and Sir J. Laçaita being the only persons in the house besides the family of the Duke of Devonshire. The Grote *Life* just then was the great subject of conversation. Mr. Gladstone was full of it, and said he hoped much from its influence on the young men of the time. Miss Martineau's letter to Mrs. Grote on her husband's death, which is given towards the end of the book, happened to be mentioned. The passage about her being weary of life touched Mr. Gladstone's tender heart. He began to consider whether something could not be done to ease the veteran authoress's last days, and he asked her plainly whether he could do anything. He had heard, he said, of her having declined a pension, but many years had passed and there might be a change. In short, nothing could have been more delicate and sympathetic than the manner in which Mr. Gladstone's offer was made. But what she had declined when still young and struggling, she was not inclined to accept now that by her own exertions she had acquired a small competency amply sufficient to supply her modest wants. Possibly, she told Robinson, her first refusal might have sprung from cowardice, the not wishing it to be thought she was poor, but to her mind her course

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was clear with regard to the latest offer, which she politely but firmly declined.

Mr. Gladstone replied :—

10 DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,  
*June 9, 1873.*

DEAR MADAM—I have received your note of yesterday. It deprives me of a pleasure which I had hoped to enjoy, but it enhances the respect and regard felt for your character by all who have had any acquaintance with it.

I am glad that you have construed so kindly and favourably the spirit of my inquiry.—With every good wish, I remain, Dear Madam, your very faithful and obedient,  
W. E. GLADSTONE.

Miss Martineau.

“We are wont to think Prime Ministers the busiest of men,” said Miss Martineau ; “is it not remarkable that three should spontaneously have offered me a pension ?”

She fully appreciated the kindness of Mr. Gladstone and his predecessors, although she would greatly have preferred that her private affairs should not be dragged into the light of publicity. Her dislike of being even mentioned in the Press amounted almost to a mania, and this it was that led her to leave instructions to her executors not to permit any of her letters to be published. This is a pity, as her communications to her friend in Bouverie Street contain, besides little bits of personal gossip of an amusing character, much shrewd comment upon public affairs. In spite of her voluminous writings, in fact, no one was ever a more active correspondent. What she suffered at the hands of writers of personal gossip in the magazines will never be known, especially as she would

rarely write to contradict anything said about her. But in conversation she would wax very wroth upon the subject. She was particularly indignant about an article on "Conversation and Conversationalists" that appeared in one of the magazines early in 1875, although it was difficult to see what harm it could do her. The writer had described a supposed scene at her house. Miss Martineau, it was alleged, had been struck by the sensible appearance of a young lady who sat with other guests at her tea-table, and had noticed that she had just said something that had been received with approval. On asking what the young lady had said, she was informed that the observation merely had reference to the excellence of the buttered toast. "Bah!" Miss Martineau was represented as saying; "and is that all?" "I never say 'Bah!'" said Miss Martineau, contradicting the whole story; "I never give my guests buttered toast, and I never ask to have an observation repeated unless it has been addressed to me personally. In my 'Letter to the Deaf' I have explained why I never do so. One has no right to ask any one to repeat out loud a thing not addressed to one's self."

In her beautiful home Miss Martineau was acquainted with most of the Lakeland celebrities. She knew Wordsworth, and said many a pang had she experienced when she saw him altering his verses for his latest edition, "spoiling what was fixed in our memory and our love." Fox How was close to her, and she was on very friendly terms with the Arnolds. She was highly incensed at a disparaging article on Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, a book the publication of

which, she declared, would be seen by and by to be an event in the history of our national life. "Of course," she said, "the thing is done, the sneer effected, the disparagement achieved by altering the meaning of the terms. 'Culture' is taken to mean, not what Mr. Arnold explains, but something infinitely less—Greek and Latin, literature generally, and some external accomplishment—with all the spiritual part of man, all the practical part, and most of the intellectual, shoved out of sight."

For many years Miss Martineau was a great sufferer, and she somewhat lost faith in physicians. To some one who spoke of having rheumatism, she said: "We never used to hear of rheumatism in my younger days. I suspect it is only another name for ignorance." She was a martyr to sleeplessness, and used to smoke a cigar every night under the impression that it would have a soporific effect. The experiment seems to have been a failure. But amidst all her troubles she was ever thoughtful of others. In 1875 she was in want of a servant, but she doubted whether it would be right to induce a young woman to make an engagement which must necessarily be a short one, and which any hour might put an end to. "I have told her the facts of my illness," she said, "but she cannot be aware *how* ill I am. Well! we will make her happy if we can."

Amidst his many occupations, Robinson made two visits to Ambleside towards the end of Harriet Martineau's life, the first in the autumn of 1873, the second in the spring of 1875. Although he already knew much of her thoughts and ways, he saw her for the first time in 1873. She was then





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in her seventy-second year, a neat, plump little woman wearing a white cap with frilled edges, a white lace collar, and a blue dress with black velvet trimming. Her visitor's impression was, "How small!" He was surprised too to find her quite unlike what he had pictured her to be from her photographs; with bright, vivacious eyes and a pleasant smile that did not exclude a certain look of determination. Her queer-shaped trumpet, of which many stories used to be told, she would put to the lips of any one who was addressing her, moving her head about as the other person moved in a manner that was irresistibly comic to any one unaccustomed to the sight. She lived in a beautiful cottage commanding a view of the Rothay valley, with Loughrigg beyond. The motto upon her sun-dial, "Light, come visit me," was, she said, suggested to her by Wordsworth.

Miss Martineau's relations with her friend and confidant at the *Daily News* were cordial to the last. In the preface to her *Biographical Sketches*, she has acknowledged his valuable literary assistance. Struggling as she was against the inroads of an insidious and always fatal disease—enlargement of the heart—she was truly grateful for such kindnesses, and never failed to express her gratitude for some trifling present, a basin of real turtle soup or what not. Release came at length, in the summer of 1876.

To the last the journalistic instinct was strong in the old lady, who gave all the necessary instructions for a telegram to be sent to the paper with which she had so long been connected, immediately on her decease taking place.

## CHAPTER XVII

A group of journalists—John Forster—Mr. Wentworth Dilke—Mr. Weir—Mr. Pigott—Edmund Yates—His sudden death at the theatre—Tragic story of a Paris correspondent—"Gin and Gospel"—The *Daily News* literary staff—Mr. Grenville Murray and Lord Derby—Sir Frank Burnand.

IN January 1855, the date of Robinson's *début* in daily journalism, there were a number of eminent men still living who had either assisted at the birth of the *Daily News* or had helped to mould its character in the earlier stages, and with three of these he soon became acquainted. They were Charles Dickens, John Forster, and Charles Wentworth Dilke, grandfather of Sir Charles Dilke. Dickens he met frequently, at the board meetings of the Guild of Literature and Art, of which mention will be made hereafter. Forster he never knew intimately, but what he did see of him tended to confirm the cabman's dictum that he was a "harbitrary gent." Mr. Forster's great defect was that he would be the central figure wherever he was—in society or in literature. When the first volume of his *Life of Dickens* appeared, a wag called it *Dickens's Life of Forster*, and there was some spice of truth in the jest, although the two subsequent volumes showed a marked improvement.

Pomposity seemed to be connected with Forster's very name. In his works he frequently gave pain to others, not from any malicious motive, but from an overweening sense of his own consequence which made it well-nigh impossible for him to pass over a name without censure, or, what was in some cases still worse, a patronising phrase. His *Life of Landor* was cruel. He had, however, a genuine affection for Dickens, and this covered many littlenesses. Dickens, although of course he was aware of this, delighted in a jovial way to make sport of his friend's peculiarities. Those who had the pleasure of walking home with the author of *Pickwick* after a dinner at which Forster had been a guest, were delighted with his imitations of the interruptions, the forwardness, the assumptions of infallible knowledge of the biographer and essayist. Dickens had a sincere regard for him, and valued his opinion on literary questions, but he laughed at him—sometimes to his face—and made boisterous fun of his pretensions. One of the novelist's stories was that, dining one day at Forster's house, and boiled beef being put on the table, the host noticed that there were no carrots. He rang the bell and the maid came. "Mary," he said, "carrots!" The girl said there were none. "Mary," was the stern rejoinder (with a wave of the hand), "*let there be carrots!*"

A man of an altogether different stamp was Mr. Dilke, who had shown great energy at one time in managing the *Daily News*, and who made a large fortune out of the *Athenæum* and other papers. He was emphatically both a literary man and a man of business, a combination less rare than is often suspected. In his early years he had

enjoyed the friendship of Lamb and Keats, and all his life he associated with the literary celebrities of the time. His mind was critical rather than constructive. He was full of "wise saws," though "modern instances" were certainly not in his way. Never was he so happy as in elucidating some literary mystery. The literature of the eighteenth century he had at his fingers' ends, and he talked and spoke of the acts and motives of George III., Lord Chatham, Lord North, Lord Rockingham, or the Grenvilles almost as if he had played a part himself in the politics of their time.

His contributions to the *Athenæum*, republished under the title of *The Papers of a Critic*, are full of curious facts, sound reasoning, and original views. In spite of his scathing criticisms of what he called the Franciscan case, the great majority of writers go on repeating Lord Macaulay's confident assertion that the *Letters of Junius* were the work of Sir Philip Francis. It is true that they do not venture to come to close quarters with Mr. Dilke, but discreetly ignore his exposure of the "coincidences" on which their theory is founded.

In 1855 the *Daily News* was edited by Mr. William Weir, and the sub-editor was Mr. Thomas Walker. Other more or less well-known men connected with it were Mr. M'Cullagh Torrens, afterwards Member of Parliament for Finsbury, Mr. (afterwards Sir Joseph) Arnould, who became a very distinguished Indian judge, Mr. (afterwards Professor) Baynes, the editor of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and Mr. E. F. S. Pigott, who was well known in his later years as the Examiner of Plays. Mr. Edmund Yates did not join the staff until

rather later. Very delightful were the little dinners that the editor and his contributors and sub-editors used to attend once a week at the "Rainbow Tavern" in Fleet Street. Mr. Weir was a Scotsman, who, after studying at the University of Göttingen, had been called to the Scottish bar. He was one of the hardest of workers, and was full of enthusiasm for what he deemed to be a good cause. He was, moreover, the most genial of men. When he died, after occupying the post of editor for only four years, it was well said of him by a brother-journalist that he was "no hireling of the press, but a sincere lover of freedom; what he wrote was from a pure conviction of its truth."

The cause of freedom in Italy and Hungary lost a good friend when Mr. Weir died. He was a modest, unassuming, genial man, but very deaf and incapable of a joke, and the young bloods of the staff used to play all sorts of good-humoured pranks on him. Edmund Yates, who was a new journalist before the new journalism was ever heard of, he looked upon with some suspicion as being inclined to levity. Yates was the dramatic critic of the paper, and he also contributed book reviews. Here is an extract from Robinson's diary referring to those times:—

On January 29, 1894, Edmund Yates gave a dinner at the Albion Hotel, Aldersgate Street, to some of his oldest friends, and in a speech he touched genially upon the tie between them. He told them that I was the person who first introduced him to journalism, gave him his first place, and opened the way. In conversation he told me a story of his early connection with the *Daily News* which I heard for the first time. I had not been at Bouverie Street long before I tried to find something there for Yates to

do. The difficulty, however, was that the editor and contributors looked upon him as a frivolous youth who might lower the dignity of the paper. At last the editor, Mr. Weir, gave him as a "puzzler" a new work on Pope's life, by Carruthers, to review. For a moment Yates was in despair. He then bethought him of Moy Thomas,<sup>1</sup> a true scholar, specially versed in the literature of the Pope days, and persuaded Thomas to write the article for him.

The paper proved an excellent one, full of new facts, sensible criticisms, and shrewd suggestions. Weir was amazed, and looked upon Yates as a genius. "I didna' know your parts, Mr. Yates," said he; "I shouldna' ha' thought ye'd know much o' Pope." "He's always been a favourite of mine," was the young contributor's unblushing reply. Upon the appearance of the review, no one was more surprised than I was, but I never guessed that any one but Yates was the author, although Thomas is one of my most intimate friends and for many years has come to my office almost every day to chat and confer upon business.

Happening to speak to Thomas about Yates's story, he made a curious addition to it. Dilke was specially familiar with the literature of the Queen Anne period, and was greatly struck with the review—so struck that he asked Thomas (then a contributor to the *Athenæum*) who the writer could be. Thomas replied that Yates was responsible for it. Dilke went down to Bouverie Street, where he had recently been manager, and asked the secretary (who owed his appointment to Dilke) who was the writer of the article. "Edmund Yates," was the reply. "Can you let me see the MS.?" asked Dilke, and the secretary, very improperly, allowed him to see it. Dilke at once recognised Thomas's handwriting, for Yates had not even copied the article, but very kindly said nothing, save a word of thanks to the secretary for the trouble he had taken. But he took care to let Thomas know of his discovery.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. William Moy Thomas, father of the compiler of the present volume.



Yates, who was a very hard hitter when attacked, was a staunch friend, and he frequently showed in his bright, entertaining journalistic work that he had not forgotten his old friends in Bouverie Street. Robinson spoke to him only a few minutes before that fatal seizure at the Haymarket Theatre in 1894. He says :—

He sat in the third row from the players. I was in the next row a little higher up. I sat next to Lord and Lady Russell. Again and again I looked at Yates from behind and wondered whether it could be my old friend. At one moment I thought it was, and the next I could not believe that that heavy-looking face, that slowly moving figure, that aged man, could be the lively, sprightly, audacious, impudent Yates. At last, between the third and fourth acts (the piece was Lord Lytton's *Money*) I determined to find out, and I threaded my way till I got behind him. He was talking to Harry Furniss. "Yes," I said, in audible tones, "it is Yates." I calculated that if it was he would be sure to look round. "Yes, of course it is," he said, and, turning slowly, he added: "Well, Robby, my boy, here I am." He then went on to tell me that he had not been to the theatre since his illness some two years ago; that all seemed the same: the same players, the same play, and the same audience. As I went out of the theatre after the curtain fell, I passed him. Two minutes afterwards came the fatal stroke. Imagine what the scene would have been had that fall to the ground—he was stooping to feel for his hat—taken place while the performance was going on!

At the service in the Savoy Chapel over Yates's remains, before they were taken to Woking for cremation, the officiating clergyman made quite a sensation by saying, instead of "We commit his body to the earth," "We commit his body to the flames." Here is another extract :—

There were many actors at the service, and it was curious to notice the difference of their demeanour. — tried hard to recognise friends he could smile at. — (a very funny low comedian) looked preternaturally grave. Irving alone looked what was natural and reserved—the artist, even here. Mrs. Bancroft seemed much affected, as was natural. She said afterwards that she knew something awful would happen that night. “And then,” she added, “he sat in stall 62, and that was just his age.”

Mr. Edward Pigott had founded, in 1850, in conjunction with Mr. George Henry Lewes, the *Leader*, which, although it numbered among its contributors Thackeray, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, Landor, Froude, Charles Kingsley, Herbert Spencer, Mazzini, Wilkie Collins, and other hardly less famous writers, turned out a disastrous speculation. Lewes contributed to it some of the soundest and liveliest dramatic criticisms ever written, in what is now called the impressionist style; Pigott wrote scholarly articles on men and books under the pseudonym of *Chat Huant*; specialists in literary subjects poured out the treasures of their knowledge in its columns; there was a department of the paper called the “Open Council,” where men of all opinions were allowed a hearing. But it was in vain. The *Leader* was born before its time, and poor Pigott lost £12,000 by his venture. He was a scholar and a wit, and he came of a good family. He had in his possession a letter from Voltaire to his grandfather, in which the sage of Ferney made his name the subject of a pun. “I shall be very pleased to see you,” so the letter ran, “and I hope and believe that M. Pigot will not turn out M. Bigot.”

As regards the foreign correspondents of the

*Daily News*—the genial, learned, irreverent joker who called himself Father Prout, and the rest—Robinson naturally saw but little of them, especially in the earlier years, when travelling was yet a serious undertaking. When he came to the office there had recently been a change in connection with the Paris correspondence, and with this a tragic story is connected. At the starting of the paper, Mr. Saville Morton, a well-known journalist in his day, was appointed correspondent at Constantinople. On the resignation of the Paris correspondence by the famous Dr. Dionysius Lardner, Mr. Morton was transferred to the French capital, where he made the acquaintance of Mr. Elliot Bower, the correspondent of the *Morning Advertiser*. Mrs. Bower was an old friend of Morton's, who had known her ever since her childhood. The Bowers do not seem to have lived happily together. Mrs. Bower was jealous, and not without reason. She gave birth to a child, and afterwards suffered from puerperal fever. In her delirium she made a confession to her husband that incriminated Morton.

Whether there was any truth in this confession was never known, but the husband was terribly upset. However, as the wife seemed to crave to see Morton, Bower asked him to come to his apartments, hoping thereby that the poor woman might be appeased. Morton went, and he and the husband sat in the sick-room for some time together. The visitor then said good-night and, passing through the dining-room, went out towards the staircase. Bower in a fit of frenzy seized a carving-knife off the table and made towards the door, his mother, who was present, vainly trying

to restrain him by catching hold of his coat, which tore in her hand. Morton had just crossed the antechamber and gone down the first few steps of the stairs when he was overtaken by Bower, who struck him with the knife near the left ear, killing him instantaneously. In the confusion the murderer fled, and managed to escape to England. A few days afterwards, however, he returned and gave himself up. At the Paris assizes a merciful jury brought in a verdict of acquittal, as usually happens in France in such cases.

Among journalists on other papers in the 'fifties one of the most remarkable was James Grant, who for many years edited the *Morning Advertiser*, and gained for that paper the nickname of "Gin and Gospel." No one was more vigilant than he in defending the interests of the licensed victuallers, and no one took a greater interest in the prize-ring. He was at the same time a Scottish Presbyterian of the strictest order, and was the author of *Our Heavenly Home*, *The Hymns of Heaven*, and other pious books, as well as a *History of the Newspaper Press*. The *Hymns of Heaven* afforded rare sport for the wits. In it the author set forth with much minuteness the poetical compositions that obtain in Paradise. In a future state, he declared, some hymns would be sung only by the angels, others by angels and men together (the angels leaving out verses occasionally), and a third class by men alone.

Unfortunately the disseminator of this strangely exclusive information was so ignorant of matters of common knowledge that he was frequently the victim of audacious hoaxers, who induced him to publish letters with pretended Greek quotations

which, being transliterated, proved to be couched in the plainest of plain English. On one occasion when, as will happen sometimes in the hurry of daily newspaper printing, a portion of a paragraph got mixed up with the Court news, for which it was not intended, in such a way that the Queen was made to look ridiculous, some humorist persuaded him that it was his duty to go and make an apology in person to Her Majesty, and he actually went to Buckingham Palace accordingly, much to the surprise and amusement of the officials.

Two distinguished literary critics with whom Robinson became acquainted were the delicate, sensitive, refined Richard Holt Hutton, a writer who helped to give its high tone to the *Spectator*, and Mr. James Hannay, who threw away glorious gifts by doing hack-work when he might have made a solid contribution to literature. Hannay, being annoyed one day at the offensive airs of some person named Addison, who claimed to be a descendant of Pope's Mr. Addison, thus addressed the offender: "Addison died leaving issue only one daughter, and as she was an imbecile, this appears to give some plausibility to your statement. But seeing that she died before she reached womanhood, it is false." Eventually, Hannay, who had influential friends, obtained the post of British Consul at Barcelona, where he died.

Coming to later times, it will be necessary to run very briefly over the names of a few of the more notable men who were Robinson's associates on the *Daily News*. Mr. F. H. Hill, a fine stylist and a man gifted with a keen, caustic satire, occupied for many years the post of editor. One of his *mots* is worth giving. A rather arrogant and

self-sufficient political critic was enlightening a dinner-party at which Hill was present on the state of political parties. "In a word," he said, "the Liberals, generally speaking, are knaves and the Conservatives fools." "I believe," quietly observed Hill, "that you, Mr. —, are a Liberal-Conservative." To those who were present, and who knew how correctly the term described the gentleman's politics, the retort seemed perfect.

Then there were Mr. William Black, Mr. Justin M'Carthy, Mr. Andrew Lang, Mr. Richard Whiteing, and Mr. Herbert Paul, all men of fine cultivation, who have made their mark in other ways. Mr. P. W. Clayden, who acted for so long as assistant editor, was, as a literary craftsman, on a rather lower plane than any of these, but in steadfast adherence to principle he yielded to none of his associates.

Mr. Grenville Murray was another colleague in a sense, and a brilliant one, although he spread his work over a large number of papers. How he libelled Lord Carrington in an article called "Bob Coachington Lord Jarvey" in the old *Queen's Messenger*, and, being prosecuted for perjury in connection with legal proceedings arising out of it, never again set foot in this country, is well known. He married a French lady, the Comtesse de Rethel, and settled in Paris, whence he wrote amusing and entertaining sketches of men and manners in the French capital.

Murray was the natural son of a Duke, who procured for him several diplomatic appointments. The last post he occupied was that of British Consul at Odessa, from which Lord Derby, the Lord Stanley of other days, removed him in conse-

quence of some irregularity in connection with the levying of dues on English vessels. Henceforward he never ceased to persecute Lord Derby whenever he had an opportunity, and it was this that led to his severing his partnership with Mr. Edmund Yates, who had started the *World* in conjunction with him. Robinson was called in as arbitrator and succeeded, wonderful to relate, in satisfying both parties. In more than one case, it may be mentioned, he was called upon to settle differences in the same manner, a fact which indicates the confidence that was generally felt in his judgment.

One of Mr. Grenville Murray's favourite allegations against Lord Derby was that of kleptomania. A good many people therefore have heard it said that the noble lord used to walk off with the spoons and forks of his hosts, but few know the real origin of the story, which was absolutely false. It seems that he was once presiding at a meeting in connection with a reformatory or refuge of some kind, and he pleaded for a merciful consideration for juvenile offenders. "How many of us are there," he asked, "who can honestly say that in our youth we have not done deeds that made us amenable to the criminal law? I myself, when a boy, have stolen an apple from an orchard." No one assuredly will think the worse of the amiable statesman for that little confession.

It is not pretended of course that all Robinson's journalistic acquaintances are here referred to by name. It may just be mentioned, however, that he was for many years on most friendly terms with Sir Henry M. Stanley, who lost no time in telegraphing to him in 1889 on arriving at Zanzibar, after his arduous journey in the interior of the

African continent : "Sound as a new dollar and all whites with me. Many thanks for your sweet and acceptable welcomes.—Stanley."

With Sir Frank Burnand, Robinson was often brought into contact, the *Punch* office being just opposite his own. The sight of the burly figure and jovial countenance of the author of *Happy Thoughts* coming down Bouverie Street was always a pleasure to him. One day he was speaking to Burnand about the Jews, and saying that even when a Jew married a Christian woman one could always see a Jewish look in the children. Generally it was the nose. "Yes, don't you see," said the inveterate joker, "it is their *damnosa hereditas*."



## CHAPTER XVIII

Journalism and journalists—A cheap press—Reporters of the old school—Leading articles—How the *Times* leaders are written—Anonymity in journalism—Delane and his contributor—Professor Fawcett on signed articles—Journalistic impostors—Palmerston and the editor—Newspaper owners—An expensive metaphor.

WRITING to a friend from Edinburgh in the year 1801, Sydney Smith said: "I am much obliged to you for your intelligence about the King. We are as ignorant of what happens in London as if we were in heaven. I shall be obliged to you to send me any news about him—either true or false, I don't care which." Such a state of things as is here implied is very difficult fully to realise at the present time, but it is easy to see that a vast change in our national life has been made by a cheap press. And how singularly falsified have been the gloomy predictions of those people who would have it that a lowering of the price of newspapers must result in their outraging decency and religion and attacking the very foundations of society! Sir E. Bulwer Lytton alone, among the chiefs of the Conservative party, spoke in the opposite sense at the time when Mr. Gladstone stood up to the House of Lords and insisted on the repeal of the paper duty.

That all the cheap newspapers now scattered

broadcast in such vast numbers every day are conducted with a high regard to principle and the public weal few would assert, but when was the case otherwise? As newspapers enjoy no State subsidy, they are naturally conducted in many—in fact in most—cases on commercial principles. The conductors sell what they think the public, that is, the greater portion of the public, want. Thus the Press, far more than public meetings and almost as much as Parliament, represents the feelings of the country. Under these circumstances is it to be wondered at that there are writers for the newspapers who have no opinions of their own, or, having opinions, keep them to themselves, and guess more or less wildly at public opinion and write in that sense? If you happen to find one of these men in a confiding mood it is quite possible he will tell you that any other plan is Quixotic, and that for himself, he writes only for the hour. There is nothing noble about his attitude, but after all it is no worse than that of the counsel who hoodwinks juries, and can say with the judge in *Trial by Jury*, or the late Mr. Montagu Williams :—

Many a burglar I've restored  
To his friends and his relations.

As regards opinions then, the cheap press does not differ greatly from the dear press that preceded it. In every other respect it is immeasurably superior. Fifty years ago the *Times*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Morning Herald* rarely left the beaten track. Two or three leaders and a foreign letter, together with market reports and shipping news, practically made up a day's issue. Now and

then a wit or a poet sent a joke or a song, but his lines seemed as much out of place as a ballad singer in a corn exchange.

There is no aspect of life now that is not dealt with in our daily papers. They have extended their view farther afield in every direction, and subjects formerly left exclusively to the literary and social reviews or magazines are considered well within their province. The weekly papers and reviews by this time have become accustomed to it, but for a long while they waged war against those who infringed upon their traditional privileges. To this day they have not quite got over the habit of sneering at their daily contemporaries, to whom they are indebted nevertheless for all their facts and not a few of their ideas. They used to be particularly severe upon the "special correspondent," which was natural, as he happened to be a modern invention.

In the old days the supply of news, save in the case of a very great event like the Crimean War, was left to the reporting class, who on no consideration were allowed to do more than chronicle leading facts in the bare language of the paragraphist. It is hardly too much to say that the more nearly the style approached, without absolutely reaching, the ungrammatical, the more suitable it was deemed. The editor and his staff sat up aloft and held no communication with those who supplied them with topics. To have suggested to one of those imperious personages the wisdom of going himself for once in a while to the scene of an event dealt with in one of his articles, would have been regarded as an insult.

The old school of reporters were a curious

race of men. This is how Robinson described them :—

They were most conscientious; they were painfully precise. I saw the other day, in a prominent newspaper, the report of a case of an inquiry before the magistrates as to the cause of a fire. A policeman who was a witness gave evidence that it broke out in a chimney. "The soot," he said, "came down in a *loomp*, like snow." "Not quite the same colour," suggested one of the magistrates. "No," replied the policeman, "it were black." Our old friends were so determined always that we should know that the soot was black! The late Henry J. Byron, who said and wrote so many witty things, was once pressed by a friend who was his host for an opinion upon a particular wine they were tasting. "Ah!" said Byron, sipping it carefully and divided between his wish to avoid hurting his friend's feelings and the desire to maintain his credit as a judge, "I think it *means* well." They meant well, those old-fashioned reporters, and deserved well too, in a way, of those whose interests they served.

There is no longer a wide gulf between the reporter and the editorial staff. Broadly speaking, the reporter has been merged in the special correspondent. It no longer suffices for him to have just a smattering of information and a knowledge of shorthand. He may even dispense altogether with the latter, although some few must continue to practise it so long as readers call for verbatim reports of speeches. Even these, as some suppose, will disappear in course of time, and there are not wanting signs that seem to point in that direction, although, as long as our Parliament commands the respect of the nation and there is vigour in our national life, it is difficult to believe that readers will be content with humorous travesties and snippety summaries.

Whatever other changes may be in store for our newspaper press, it may safely be assumed that the leading article will always be with us. It was the *Times* that invented, or at least popularised, that essential feature of modern journalism, and its "leaders" were long looked upon with almost superstitious veneration. No longer ago than the year 1881, Robinson happened to be staying at a seaside hotel, and one evening in the smoking-room he met a gentleman who was good enough to enlighten those present upon a good many subjects, including journalism.

After speaking in terms of reverence of the might of the *Times*, which, he said, made every cabinet in Europe quake, he went on: "It may interest you (the dozen people who were listening to him) to know a fact which I have on the highest authority. Indeed a friend of mine is (this was said very mysteriously) behind the scenes. The fact is this: The articles in the *Times*, which we read and admire so much, are not written, as you probably suppose, each by one man. To one article half-a-dozen men contribute each one or more paragraphs. They sit in different rooms, and after the subject has been given to them, each sends in to the editor his contribution to the article. Thus a *Times* leader is a concentration of half-a-dozen intellects." Robinson refrained from taking part in the conversation, and no other person spoke except a weak-looking man who ventured to say vaguely: "Ah, there's no doubt the men who write in the *Times* are very clever men."

To this day, while writers in other parts of many papers are allowed to sign their names or initials to their contributions, leading-article

writers have to conform strictly to the old rule of anonymity. Ought they to reveal themselves and let us know exactly who it is who tells us that a measure is essential to the welfare of the country, or that it will fix an indelible stain upon its honour? There is much to be said on both sides, from the point of view both of writer and newspaper. As regards the one, it may be for more than one reason inconvenient to him that his identity should be revealed as the writer of a particular article. He loses fame, it may be, but he gains a peaceful life. Any little unpleasantness is sure to fall upon his editor. An honourable member calls attention to a breach of the privileges of the House in a newspaper, and forthwith the editor is haled before the Speaker, and possibly imprisoned in the Clock Tower. A gentleman of sturdy physique and menacing air calls at the office, and wants to see the writer of a certain article. Again the editor has to suffer, or at all events run the risk of suffering, for the supposed fault or offence of the contributor.

The editor of a well-known weekly literary journal was acquainted with a young novelist, and in his paper that novelist had what is called a "slating" review of his work, about which he wrote indignantly. Shortly afterwards the editor was at his club, and was told that a box had arrived addressed to him. He opened it and found some handsome pieces of china, and at the top the young author's card. Delighted, he sat down and wrote to his friend to say how pleased he was to think that the momentary irritation was over, that friendly relations were restored. And what a very pleasant intimation of the same was

contained in the box! Mrs. Editor would be delighted. Mr. Editor drove home with the box, which he opened before his wife with great glee. She was pleased too, but her countenance fell directly she saw the china. "Oh, you silly goose," she said, "this is the present we sent him on his wedding." It is probable that the editor knew practically nothing about the offending article.

As regards the newspaper in the case under consideration when this little digression got in the way, it commits itself to certain views, but at the same time it adds to what may be called its goodwill any reputation its writers may gain for it. Many people who have noticed how many more daily papers there are in Paris than in London, have wondered what can be the reason of this. It arises chiefly from the fact that there is practically no such thing as anonymity in connection with French journalism. A writer with a dashing style like the late M. de Girardin or M. Rochefort can start a daily paper and at once sell fifty or a hundred thousand copies daily. Readers buy his paper because they want to get his views. In England a large circulation is of much slower growth, because the public have to find out what a paper is like before they will buy it, and it takes time for them to become accustomed to it.

A point not to be overlooked in considering the question of anonymity in journalism is this, that the writer of a signed article speaks only for himself, whereas an anonymous contributor speaks with the authority of his paper, which has, or should have, its own individuality. Even those journalists who were in agreement politically with

Mr. James Macdonell, the well-known contributor to the *Times*, were fain to censure him for having, during the absence of Mr. Delane, the editor, succeeded in getting into that paper an article on the Eastern Question expressing views of which Delane strongly disapproved. Delane telegraphed at once from Scotland instructing Macdonell to write no more on Eastern affairs, and the message was followed by a letter in which he said: "I would rather have walked from Dunrobin to London on my hands and knees than that the article should have appeared." "It is strange," remarks Robinson in his diary, "that the biographer does not see that the story is far from creditable to Macdonell. I had a great regard for the latter, but in this case his zeal led him (in my opinion) into an indefensible act." Mr. Macdonell's published opinions in fact purported to be those of his paper, whereas they were nothing of the kind.

Here is another extract from our diary, bearing on the question of anonymity in journalism:—

Anonymity in the press greatly adds to its power. Some years ago Professor Fawcett argued against the publication of unsigned articles, which I defended. The other day (1877) I met him at dinner, and was gratified as well as surprised when he called out to me in his loud voice: "Robinson, I've come to agree with you now as to the balance of reasons being against signed articles, and for this cause chiefly: The signed article gives the young or unknown writer no opportunity, and it encourages the celebrity in carelessness. The conductors of the *Contemporary Review* and the *Nineteenth Century* look out for big names, not for good articles, and a few big men sell their names. As a rule their productions under this system are most inferior. When I read the *Quarterly*



or the *Edinburgh*, where the articles are unsigned, I never ask myself who the particular writers are ; they may be Smith, or Brown, or Snooks : I judge each essay on its merits, and if I hear afterwards the author's name, I am still more interested, but then I am interested in him because of his article, and not in his article because of him." These remarks of Mr. Fawcett are to me conclusive as to one branch of the discussion.

Of course impostors who claim other people's work as their own—not an altogether unknown class—are quite satisfied that contributions to the Press, and indeed all writings, should be anonymous. Did not a literary paper, when it was first announced that George Eliot was a lady, aver that it knew better, as "we ourselves are acquainted with the author, Mr. So-and-so"? Some years ago a steamship called the *Dacca* was wrecked on the Dædalus reef in the Red Sea, and Mrs. Tymons, a lady who took an interest in the emigration of poor English girls to Australia, and who happened to be on board, sent a picturesque account of the sufferings of passengers and crew to the *Daily News*, which was copied into the Australian papers. Some time afterwards the lady was at a dinner-party in Brisbane, when the conversation turned on the letter, which was praised. "I am glad you like it," said another lady present, "for I wrote it." "Well, if that is the case," said the real Simon Pure coolly, "I owe you five guineas." "I don't understand you," said the lady. "Why," said the other, "I thought I wrote that letter ; I certainly received five guineas for it from the *Daily News*, and if you were the writer I ought to hand the money to you." Some little sensation followed, and then, with wonderful

presence of mind, the impostor said : " Well, I wrote a letter so much like it that I thought it must be mine."

As regards leader-writers, though to the general public they are unknown, in certain sets their identity, as a rule, is a mere *secret de Polichinelle*, although this certainly did not justify Cobden in publicly denouncing Delane by name because the *Times* was opposed to Free Trade. Leader-writers like to go into society like other people. It is not easy for them to conceal the fact that they "write for the newspapers"; perhaps they are not unwilling to have it known, for to have an audience, say, of 100,000 people daily is to wield considerable power. But ought journalists to go into the society of the men they criticise? Ought editors and leader-writers to be seen in the drawing-rooms of politicians? Ought dramatic critics to make friends among the actors? Here again is the rub. Journalists who do do those things necessarily hamper themselves. Of this no one was better aware than that crafty old Lord Palmerston. Mr. Lalor, when editing the *Morning Chronicle*, at that time a powerful organ, strongly censured Palmerston's policy towards Portugal. Sir John Easthope, the proprietor of the paper, was spoken to on the subject by the statesman. "I wish, Easthope," he said, "you would ask that gentleman to give me the pleasure of his company at my house. I should be delighted to make his acquaintance."

Somewhat reluctantly on Lalor's part, a visit was paid. The result, Lalor told Robinson, was such as to convince him of the un wisdom of such acquaintanceships. "Lord Palmerston hurried

forward to grasp my hand," he said ; "assured me that he was amazed at the knowledge and insight my articles displayed, was proud to know me, and so forth ; *but* there were just two or three points on which he ventured to think I had been mistaken. Putting a library ladder against his shelves, he stepped nimbly up and pulled out volume after volume of despatches in order to establish his case. He so overwhelmed me," added Lalor, "with his winning courtesy that I felt myself getting involved. I got away as soon as I could, and vowed in my own mind that I would no more accept invitations to a *tête-à-tête* with the Secretary of State whose policy I had to review."

Palmerston has plenty of imitators in these days, but not all are equally straightforward. There exist a certain class of politicians who pose as having the utmost contempt for newspapers, which they call "the usual channels of information," as though the word itself were unmentionable to ears polite. One of these men was entrusted, together with two colleagues, with an inquiry, and the day after the report had been agreed to, the substance of it appeared in a morning newspaper. The question was, who had given it to the person who published it ? "For my part," said the fastidious journalist-hater, "I have always avoided the *vermin*." And this was said in the presence of one who happened to know that the speaker, only the day before, had been closeted with a newspaper editor for an hour in order to cram him with information on a certain subject that was then being discussed !

The leader-writer, it must be supposed, is born, not made. At all events it is a vocation in which few excel and many fail. A very clever literary

man, who was once appointed to a permanent position on the *Daily News*, resigned the very first night he was at work. He took three hours to write a fifty-line article which was found after all to be unusable, and which he begged to be allowed to take away as a memento of "a failure he had expected." He said there must have been some mistake, as he had never written leaders, and could only write "when the inspiration was on him, after breakfast."

Something has been said about the difficulty of starting a newspaper in England. However this may be, there seems to be a wonderful fascination in the undertaking, although it is doubtful whether one paper in twenty ever returns any profits to its proprietors. Large sums of money, it is well known, have been made out of the Press, but it is probable that much larger sums have been lost. The late Mr. Morier Evans of the *Standard* was a shrewd, capable man, who by good investments had amassed a respectable fortune of about £20,000. He started the *Hour* newspaper, lost it all, and died of a broken heart. Hundreds of such instances, not all so tragic, might be adduced. It is so nice to own a paper, even though it has its disadvantages apart from monetary considerations! "I wonder So-and-so keeps up the So-and-so" (a rather aggressive paper), some one said one day to Mr. James Payn; "he gets nothing by it." "Oh yes, he does," said Payn; "he *gets* cut."

There is indeed a wonderful vitality in certain newspapers out of which no one gets anything, at all events in the shape of dividends. Year after year they go on although no profit is made, and generally there is not the faintest prospect of any.

Frequent changes of *personnel* are, as a rule, one of the symptoms of this condition of affairs.

When Robinson first came to London he made the acquaintance of Mr. F. G. Tomlins, who had quite a speciality with regard to bankrupt newspapers. When things were going wrong and did not seem to improve, he was invariably "called in" to make sweeping changes. If one saw advertisements appearing to the effect that new blood had been poured into the veins of the *Weekly Decline*, one might safely infer that Tomlins was at his work. One simile of his ruined scores of men. It concerned a pump. What did a wise owner of a pump do? Tomlins would ask. Why, he poured in a little water until the spring was reached, and, hey presto! copious draughts henceforth sprang out unbidden. Whenever Tomlins's eloquence had failed to convince some newspaper proprietor in difficulties, his friends would ask: "Have you tried him with the pump?"

## CHAPTER XIX

In a newspaper office—Bores and lunatics—Actions for libel—The M.P. and his obituary notice—Party organs and their sources of information—Letters to the editor—Practical jokers—Bogus reports—A clever rascal—Penny-a-liners—Mistakes of reporters.

A WHOLE book might be written about the people who frequent newspaper offices. "Ah," said a caller to an American editor, seeing broken tables and chairs on the floor, "I see you've had visitors." The traditional caller with a grievance (and a big stick) does not often make his appearance in Fleet Street in these days, but others scarcely less dreaded by a busy journalist are ever to the fore. There are men who will not be denied. One individual at least has rushed into the editorial sanctum dragging along with him a good strong commissioner who vainly tried to stop him; and insisted on having his say. A perfect stranger who has been shown up, has deliberately taken off his overcoat before uttering a word and hung it on a peg. Such an act goes beyond the limits of human endurance. How does such a one get in? Sometimes he bears the same name as a trusted contributor whose face the editor fully expects to see. Instead, it is perhaps the features of an injured votary of science who has brought a dozen actions against the Admiralty, and claims that every iron-

clad that has been launched during the past ten years has been built from sketches sent in by him, pencilled on odd slips of paper, to the First Lord.

Some of these people have an easy expression of self-satisfaction, of infatuated sincerity, which to a busy man is positively maddening. Many inventors have been treated scurvily by the world, but for all that, as a class they inspire little sympathy, at all events in Fleet Street. Their drawings, their memorials, mostly thumb-worn and tattered at the edges, are viewed with dread. One dear polite old fellow, a Frenchman, who called more than once in Bouverie Street, was rather an exception. If the manager was not very pressed he liked to see him and to hear his broken English. "Pardon, my dear sir," the old gentleman would say. "You vere so verree good always to see me, and noe ze grand vork is coming to be finish." "But, my dear Monsieur," was the reply, "I thought we should be going through the air to the Ville Lumière by this time." "Yes, yes, yes," said the old man, "but it is a verree funny meestake I make. Ze stage, ze platform, what you call it? want just vun little zing. I have it noe. It is done!"

The old fellow had such a sweet smile and courteous air that somehow one could not make fun of him or throw cold water on his project. One cordially wished he might succeed some day with his wings, or his sails, or his aerial steam-boiler, or whatever it was, and really guide an air-ship at will round and round an astonished metropolis. How well he would have done it! With what a magnificent bow he would have acknowledged the plaudits of admiring millions!

But it was not to be, for he is long since dead. Let us hope the harmless, good-natured old fellow kept the faith until the end.

Another visitor, who would stop but a little while, was an exceedingly clever man in his profession, but always, when out of it, absorbed by some idea such as makes people say, "There must be a screw loose somewhere." "There is an end at last," he exclaimed one day on entering the managerial room, "to all the rubbish about Board schools, denominational schools, colleges, and other humbugging places of the sort."—"Oh, indeed! What is it?"—"The simplest thing in the world. Teach through the eye. The whole human race can be taught in a few days."—"I don't understand."—"Panoramas, my dear boy, panoramas." During the war between Russia and Turkey the same ingenious person poured ridicule upon both Powers, and upon all existing ways of waging war. "I could annihilate the biggest army ever put in the field, in one hour."—"Good gracious! How?"—"Chemicals, my dear fellow, chemicals. Fling my drugs among the enemy and you'd suffocate the whole lot of them."

The gentlemen who have discovered how to get something out of nothing by devising a plan for the payment of the National Debt without making anybody contribute a farthing, are not unknown in newspaper-land. One of them having got in under the pretence that he had a communication of the utmost importance, explained that he had written to the Treasury on some such scheme, and "Would you believe it?" he said. "I got an answer of a very cold, not to say insulting character from a private secretary. Of course," he



added, "I cannot reveal what my scheme is, because it is so simple, so obvious, that no one would give me credit for it afterwards. I trust nobody. But this I am prepared to do. I will divulge it to you for £50,000, payable beforehand."

Newspaper office bores, like other bores, are divisible into a variety of species. There is the old friend of one's school-days, who seems to think that an editor or manager is "at home" all day long when at his place of business; the gentleman (or lady, a worse case) who has a letter of introduction and who would so like to see how a paper is produced, and is anxious to be personally conducted over every department, from the leaders' room to the foundry; the person who wants advice on some purely private and personal matter, and the man who wants you to puff some article or concern in which he is interested. All estimable people possibly in a general way, just as matter is all right until it gets into the wrong place, but in a newspaper office—bores. The contributor may also be a bore. One of these, an excellent man, but one who always used a hundred words where one would have sufficed, happened to be lame, and one day the manager, being hard pressed, said: "Show him up," at the same time mentally resolving that he would not offer his visitor a chair. Ha! ha! He was lame and must soon give in. The contributor-bore stood like a fowl perched on one leg for about half an hour, pouring out a copious stream of words all the time, until the manager's heart relented and he said: "Won't you take a seat, Mr. —." "Oh, no thank you," said the other, "I prefer to stand."

The most unwelcome visitors probably are

lawyers who come about a "grossly libellous statement" upon one of their clients. It is beyond question that if the whole bench of judges were to edit a paper they could not prevent a libel creeping into its columns occasionally. As a rule lawyers write, but some call, especially the shady ones, who come and throw out dark hints about an arrangement under which they get practically everything and the client practically nothing—the old story. Talk about champerty and maintenance being illegal, forsooth! Why, there are probably in London at this moment a dozen lawyers who make it their business to look through the papers every day to see if they can construe anything into a libel on some person, and when they have found what they want, go to the injured one and propose to "take up the case" as a speculation in which lawyer and client are partners. Some years ago a woman was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for stealing, and a reporter inadvertently said that the sentence was one of two months. Forthwith all the papers which published the report—that is to say, nearly all of them that gave any report on the subject at all, as the papers are not specially represented in the ordinary way in the law courts—received a lawyer's letter. After a compromise had been arrived at and a small sum paid, the woman happened to mention the fact that she had received no fewer than seven letters from solicitors pointing out the error and asking to be allowed to act for her.

Such cases as the one here referred to are not serious, but others are. Litigious people will bring frivolous actions and exhaust every device for prolonging the proceedings, thereby piling up the costs, and when at last a verdict is returned for the

defendants, file their petition in bankruptcy. This is what happened in the case of a man who was charged with "unlawfully abducting and secreting" his own wife, who was an imbecile under legal guardianship. A paper headed a report of the case: "Charge of Kidnapping," and that was the supposed libel. It was in vain that the editor pointed out to the man and his legal advisers that "kidnapping" was defined in a standard work of reference as "unlawfully abducting and secreting." The case, after having dragged its weary length along for months and months, at last came on for trial, and the plaintiff's case was laughed out of court. Nevertheless the proceedings cost that paper over £400.

Members of Parliament not infrequently wend their way to Fleet Street. One of them some years ago looked in to assure the manager that he was not dead, as stated in that morning's issue. "It is perfectly disgraceful," he said, pointing to a marked paragraph in a paper he held in his hand. He was told of course that it was a most regrettable mistake, that a correction should appear, and that inquiries should be made as to how the false rumour originated, but at the same time it was pointed out to him that every issue of a newspaper contains thousands of assertions, and that it would not be possible to secure absolute proof of their truth, editors being compelled to rely upon contributors who are deemed trustworthy. "Oh," said the Member of Parliament, "I don't care a button about your having said I was dead, but do you think it decent, after my services to my country in Parliament, to give me no more than a forty-line obituary notice?"

Then there are the politicians who want to do a good turn for some constituent. A member of the Irish party looked in on one occasion. "Pardon me," he said, "I am sorry to take up a moment of your valuable time. I want to speak to you about a clever sort of fellow in my borough—they say he's a wonderful fellow, mind ye—and he wants to get connected with some first-class London paper and write leading articles."—"He's writing now, I suppose, for the local paper?"—"Oh no, by George! he hasn't yet begun, ye understand, but his friends tell me once he's in London he'll make a sensation."—The manager shakes his head and ventures to say that so far as Bouverie Street is concerned, Ballyhooly must continue to nurse its genius. "Well, I expected as much," coolly replied the Irish member. "But, by George, they put so much pressure on me, ye understand, that I couldn't for the life of me but ask you. No doubt the young shaver is a conceited ass and can't write a decent sentence."

Sometimes, but this is very rarely, a Cabinet Minister comes, by appointment, to give special information to which the Government are anxious to give publicity. In that case he is expressly deputed to do it, as Ministers in their individual capacity are pledged to secrecy. It is astonishing, however, how few "tips" are vouchsafed to party organs, as such. How many columns of valuable matter did Sir William Harcourt give to the *Times* in the shape of letters to the editor—to the *Times* which for years attacked and ridiculed him with the greatest vigour! A newspaper actually suffers sometimes from having friends in prominent places, for such friends will be nervously

anxious lest they should be suspected of betraying secrets, and instead of giving information are apt to beg that not a word may be said about so-and-so, full details of which accordingly appear in some contemporary. In September 1892 two leader-writers of the *Daily News* sat in Parliament, and one of its proprietors (the Liberal party being in power) was in the Cabinet, yet for a time the editor had to complain that he was left completely in the dark as to what was going on with respect to an important question of the moment, that of Uganda. It would even seem as though politicians took special delight in slighting their champions in the Press. In 1895 Mr. Ellis, the Liberal whip, wrote to urge the editor of the *Daily News* to call attention to Turkish misrule in Armenia, and had to be told that the editor had hardly been doing anything else for months and months, until he feared he must have seriously taxed the patience of his readers.

But to return to our bores. The callers are comparatively few. It is much easier to write a letter, and the bores revel in correspondence. Often they are very cunning, disguising their real purpose at the outset by some plausible remarks on some matter of passing interest. They are like the concocters of advertisements who begin by philosophising upon some subject of the day, and lure you on to a description of the case of a person who has been cured by somebody's pills after having been given up by all the doctors. It requires no great experience to find out from the letters received in Fleet Street what are the topics that for the moment are occupying the public mind. The day of all days for a large post is Monday.

Then the letter-opener has indeed his work cut out for him. Whether these letters are written before church, or after church, or instead of church, does not appear, but a greater number are written on Sundays—those days which George Herbert says are “the pillars on which Heaven’s palace archèd lies”—than on any other days.

Men there are who either were born with the gift of keeping their names before the public or who have mastered it by untiring practice. “The best way to reach the North Pole” has gone back of late years, but it will doubtless come up again before long. “How to live long” is a good old stager. It is the echo of a famous controversy on the subject of centenarians which had a large following in its day. The success or failure of marriage might have been started as a good speculation by an ink or paper manufacturer. Thousands write for the mere sake of writing. “Who was Lord Beaconsfield’s nurse?” “Did Lord Tennyson send his first contribution to the *Family Herald*?” “Was Millais ever a sign-painter?” These and similarly exciting questions will be propounded by correspondents who never weary.

The passion for letter-writing to newspapers is recognised in Fleet Street as a distinct form of mental aberration. Men, and women too, will write long pages week after week for years to a particular journal without a single line ever obtaining admission, although the letters are clearly indited with that object. There was a lady who used to spend a handsome income yearly in scattering printed letters to newspaper offices all over the country, in which verses of Scripture were incoherently mixed with allusions to current events.

It is rather startling to get a letter like the following :—

SIR—I was born in — the 15th of May 1867, a beautiful child and, unknown to my mother, mine eyes were tampered with. In 1870, for bad manners, my mother stamped my features out of shape. If any one asks why I think I am Christ, I say that I searched the whole court of Heaven and could not find Him. Let the public draw their own conclusions.

I still have the Beatific Vision from the Sun and Moon.  
—Yours faithfully, \_\_\_\_\_

Had this been published there is little doubt that the public would, as the writer himself suggested, have drawn their own conclusions. Here is another proffered contribution :—

SIR—Can you oblige by inserting the following in your columns under the title of “Who Can Deny It?”

1. That General Gordon was seen alive in 1888.
2. That Dr. Benson’s death was unnatural.
3. That the ordinations of bishops, priests, and deacons of the Anglican Church are valid.
4. That the sale of newspapers, religious or otherwise, is a violation of the Fourth Commandment.
5. That the blaze of curtains at Buckingham Palace in July 1896 was a danger signal.

ALL THIS I KNOW.

Another would-be contributor, signing “Ezra, king of England,” and dating from “Heaven,” writes to say that in spite of lawyers, freaks, and mountebanks this nation shall be the leading power so long as he remains at his present celestial address ; and yet another, in intimating that he is in communion with the spirit of Charles Dickens (he

does not forget, the rogue, that he is writing to the *Daily News*), who is conscious of the sympathy of his readers all over the world, rather spoils the effect of this revelation by requesting the favour of a little loan of a sovereign.

Foreigners' letters often have a humour of their own. Here is an application from an Italian journalist :—

RESPECTABLE DIRECTOR—Being in the condition to give political positive notices for the inmost relations I have with political personages and because I have uninterrupted practices with the different Ministrys of Kingdome, I propose me as correspondent of illustrious newspaper directed wisely by you, like also I should be in the condition to give very exact Vaticano's notices.

If you shall believe pleasant my proposal and of conveniency, I beg you to advise me with a quick rencounter, being I able at this moment to begin with articles of some importance and also to write illustrative articles of ancient monuments, variety, and so on.

About the price, my exigencies are modest.

Accept in so far the most sincere attestation of my esteem and with the eldest respect, believe me, your very devout,

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There is one class of correspondents for whom editors and sub-editors must always be on the lookout. They are the practical jokers. Mention has been made of the shameful way in which poor old James Grant was taken in by them. But the most wary are sometimes victimised. Thus one of the most influential London journals came out one day with the startling statement that Prussia had joined the Zollverein, when it might as well have said that Queen Anne was dead; and the same paper at other times has published a thrilling



description of an ascent of a hitherto unconquered mountain, "Mount Iseran," on the road from Turin to Aosta, which mountain never had a real existence; and an account of a pretended threatening letter from an author to the editor of the *Athenæum*, who wrote to say that the thing was a pure fabrication, as he knew nothing of the gentleman in question, and had not heard from him. But then there is hardly one of the long-established papers that has not in its time fallen a victim to the practical joker in some way or other. In one case at least the laugh was against the joker. A morning paper that had started a subscription for a public object received two postal orders for one shilling from correspondents (it was a joint letter) who asked that they might be acknowledged under two imaginary names, the juxtaposition of which would have had a startling effect. The sub-editor put in his list: "'No You Don't,' 2 shillings."

Another class who occasionally try to victimise editors are the more disreputable of the outside reporters or penny-a-liners. Here, however, the object is different. As a rule it is simply done to make money out of the "copy," but in some cases there is another motive as well. One man used to send thrilling accounts of accidents by field or flood, in the course of which it was tolerably certain that somebody's food for infants would be mentioned. A barge containing etc., etc., had been run into in the Thames and the bargeman drowned. There had been a terrific collision in the City, with fatal results, between a waggon laden, etc., etc., and some other vehicle. Sub-editors soon got to know that these accidents

which brought the infants' food into prominence were fictitious. Then a safe of a particular make had been attacked by burglars, who, although they were undisturbed from Saturday night to Monday morning, had to mop their brows and make off confessing they were beaten; and afterwards the disinfectant manufactured by a certain firm received special attention. The paragraph about the disinfectant was always to the effect that some person had died from swallowing carbolic acid in mistake for beer, and that the coroner in summing up had said that this showed the folly of not using So-and-so's patent article, which was quite harmless.

In one particular paragraph in which this harrowing and improving story was told, the occurrence was alleged to have taken place at Sutton. In due course, after its appearance, the penny-a-liner applied for payment, sending a boy with his little account. He was traced to a public-house in Fleet Street, and was given in custody. The manager was sent for, and he went to the Bridewell police station to charge the man formally with attempting to obtain money under false pretences. But it was no good. "Are you prepared to say," asked the shrewd police inspector, "that no such event has happened at Sutton? I see, by the way," he added, consulting a gazetteer, "that there are more than seventy Suttons in England. Can you swear it has not happened in any one of them?" The manager of course could not, and the man was released, winking, yes, positively winking, as he went out a free man. Subsequently he must have grown less wary, for he was sentenced to a term of imprison-

ment for a similar fraud, or attempted fraud, on another paper.

Not all penny-a-liners, of course, are of this disreputable character. But the whole race is fast disappearing. It is hardly possible for a man in these days of news agencies and special articles to make a living at the business. Time was when a liner who had had the good fortune to unearth a murder or a mystery had the preference given to his "copy" on that subject as long as public interest in it continued. As his accounts were always on what is called "flimsy," that is to say, manifolded so that they could be sent to a dozen or more newspapers, and as he was paid not less than a penny and in some cases three halfpence a line by each, he sometimes secured a rich harvest. Newspapers nowadays keep a staff of men ever ready to be sent off at a minute's notice in any direction whence news of an interesting character is likely to be obtained, and the poor liner is practically ousted.

The old-fashioned liner was a Bohemian with strange habits and a style of writing that was stranger still. Possibly because he was paid by space, he revelled in tropes and figures, provided they were sufficiently hackneyed. Fire was never fire; it was the "devouring element." A sweep was "a sable specimen of humanity yclept a sweep"; lawyers were "gentlemen of the long robe"; actors were "disciples of the sock and buskin." He was rather apt, moreover, to use words of the meaning of which he had a very vague idea. In a news paragraph that appeared in a paper one day, the reader was informed that "as the meeting was private nothing is known

of what transpired." Where did the genuine old-fashioned penny-a-liners vanish to? One might as well ask what became of the wig-makers when wigs went out of fashion.

Mistakes of some of the regular reporters are often amusing. A prominent Member of Parliament having said that most of the Irish magistrates were no more capable of stating a case for a higher court than they were of "writing a Greek ode," one newspaper cast aspersions upon their ability to "ride a Greek goat." "I feel like Figaro in Beaumarchais," once said Mr. Chamberlain. A London morning paper had it: "I feel like Figaro in the Bon Marché"! Lord Randolph Churchill described Mr. Bright as the Gamaliel of Birmingham. A reporter made him figure as "the gamecock of Birmingham." The list might be extended for pages and pages. For some of the worst mistakes in newspapers, however, the modern system of telegraphing and the consequent abbreviation are responsible. When the late Sir Richard Wallace died, a morning paper announced that his decease had taken place while he was playing at bagatelle in the Bois de Boulogne, a singular place for such an amusement. There is no doubt that the message had stated in brief that Sir Richard had died at his well-known residence, Bagatelle, in the Bois de Boulogne. A worse mistake was once made by Reuter. He sent out a message to the effect that the wife of the Hon. Graham Berry, the Premier of Victoria, had presented him with twins, and that one of the children was his first son. This rather puzzled people who knew something about Mr. Berry, as he happened to be unmarried. Soon afterwards came a rectifica-

tion. It turned out that Reuter's message from Australia had read : "Graham Berry twins first son," and that "twins first son" should have been "turns first sod," with reference of course to a new line of railway.

## CHAPTER XX

Literature and its professors—Charles Dickens and the Guild of Literature and Art—Failure of the Guild—Dickens as chairman, speaker, lecturer—Anecdotes of him by his son—"Orion" Horne—Charles Lever—Crabbe Robinson—A group of novelists—Strange story of Mrs. Oliphant's *Kirsteen*—Professor Freeman and the students—Poets and their ways—Collaboration—Autograph-hunters and their wiles.

WITH one of the most illustrious authors of his time Robinson was brought into rather close relationship. This was Charles Dickens. Forster has told us in his account of what he called "Splendid Strolling" how the Guild of Literature and Art took shape out of a scheme for benefiting two authors in distressed circumstances by giving a number of amateur performances in different provincial centres, and it was at the meetings of that institution, of which Robinson was elected a member in November 1854, that he first met the author of the *Pickwick Papers*. That unfortunate Guild of Literature and Art! What a text it would make for a sermon on the vanity of human wishes! It was, Dickens declared, to change the status of the literary man in England, and to make a revolution in his position which no Government could effect.

Here is its charter, an Act of Parliament, with the Royal Coat of Arms, and underneath it the

words: "Anno Decimo Septimo Victoriæ Reginæ." It sets forth for the information of all whom it may concern that "Whereas an association was formed in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty one, under the name of the Guild of Literature and Art, for the purpose, 1st, of aiding those of its members who follow literature or the fine arts as a profession to obtain and continue insurances upon their lives; 2ndly, for the purpose of establishing a provident sickness fund for such members; and 3rdly, for the purpose of providing dwellings for the benefit of its members, and of granting annuities to its members and their widows"; therefore, it is added, it shall be lawful for such Guild to perform certain things, among which is the acquiring of lands with which Sir Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer Lytton, of Knebworth, in the county of Hertford, baronet, has expressed his willingness to endow it.

In the present year of grace it is as though the Guild had never had a corporate or any other existence, but all honour to the great man of letters who worked so nobly in establishing it! Dickens slaved for it as few men ever slaved in a good cause, and communicated his enthusiasm to others. In a chatty article which he wrote for the *Cornhill Magazine*, and which was passing through the Press at the very time he died, Robinson has given his own account of Dickens's appearances at the board meetings.

I can easily figure him in the thick of the work; writing a play, acting in it, bringing men together, some with a command, some with an intimation that they *were* in it; here a joke, there a pathetic touch. His smile was enough; Gradgrind could not hold out against Charles

Dickens. . . . At our meetings, Dickens, if present, was always in the chair. We held a council meeting first, and followed with a "general" meeting. But the latter meetings were not all crowded. Almost immediately after I had joined, I had a trying time in this respect. When I arrived at the office of *All the Year Round*, where we met, I was told that the council were sitting, but would not be many minutes. Then came the intimation that the general meeting was on. I went upstairs and entered the room, in which I found several gentlemen talking and laughing together. There were Robert Chambers, Charles Knight, Augustus Egg, Dudley Costello, Mark Lemon, and a few more. "Here's the general meeting!" said Wills, and everybody laughed. "Shall we read the minutes of the meeting?" he said, addressing me, and there was another laugh. I was nervous enough, but not too nervous to resolve to be even with my friend if I could. "If you please," I replied, and I chuckle even now to think of the gravity with which I listened to him, and how Charles Dickens, who was in the chair, showed his amusement. In the minute-book is, "General Meeting, June 3, '61; only Mr. Robinson attended," and this is signed "Charles Dickens."

Charles Dickens, it was often said, was above all things an actor. He was indeed an actor, and a consummate one. He was never, when in public, what in the ordinary sense of the word is termed "natural." I saw him again and again at these Guild meetings; I heard him address various public assemblages, and I listened, I think, to each of his public readings; and in all he had consciously an ideal in his mind, up to which he may be said to have acted. His characters have been counted, and they run into hundreds and hundreds. He must have created them as he walked and rode and conversed or mused. The situation in which he found himself for the time became an ideal one forthwith, and his part a part with the rest. I once saw him hurry forward in St. James's Square to help a policeman who was struggling



with a desperate fellow whom he had arrested for stealing lead. My friend Mr. J. C. Parkinson, well known to and much liked by Dickens, was with me, and we hastened to assist. I really trembled, for the man looked savagely at Mr. Dickens, and in another moment a blow might have fallen. "I'll go with you to the station," said Mr. Dickens to the policeman; and he did. Even then his voice, his air, his walk, made me think of some accomplished artist called upon to represent all this upon the stage.

As chairman he was as precise and accurate in carrying out the traditions of the post. Before business began, his happy laugh rang through the room; he had a word for every friend, and generally they were his associates as well as friends. Voices were high in merriment, and it looked as though business would never begin; but when Mr. Dickens did take his seat, "Now, gentlemen, Wills will read us the minutes of the last meeting. Attention, please. Order!" it might have been the most experienced chairman of Guildhall, purpled by a hundred public dinners.

It is only seven years ago that the Guild was dissolved and its remaining property divided between the Literary Fund and the Artists' Benevolent Institution, but the conviction was early forced upon its promoters that it was a failure. Needy literary men we have always with us, but they will not bury themselves in a little out-of-the-way place in Hertfordshire. A genuine applicant with unimpeachable testimonials would have been taken to the bosom of the Guild and fêted as never prodigal was fêted in this world. But he was not to be found. Here is a little scene, graphically sketched, from the same article in the *Cornhill Magazine*:—

Dickens had no sooner sat down than he exclaimed (professional chairman's voice): "Well, gentlemen, good news to-day. A capital tenant at last. A great man;

good scholar, a modern Lindley Murray, and all that." "Hooray!" we shouted. "We only want a beginner, you know," continued the chairman. "We shall now be bothered by the numbers." When we heard the name, we felt we wanted to shake hands about it, and we thought remorsefully of our past want of faith. We were not supposed to be allowed by the rules to find any kind of furniture with a house, but to-day Dickens, who all his life long was always looking to do a kind thing for somebody, said in his most winning way (and those who never witnessed it can scarcely understand what an adorable sort of way it was): "And now, what do you say about finding carpets? House very chilly when he comes into it without carpets. What do you say, Lemon? Carpets, my boy." He addressed Mark Lemon as by instinct, suggesting as he did everything that was comfortable. We tried to look grave. The joke was to pretend we were concerned about the letter of the law. Then came the laughter, and the carpets carried the day.

Alas! at the next meeting our chairman, in an amusingly melancholy voice, told us the carpets had not been ordered. They would not be wanted. — had altered his mind. He seemed (and this was said in a reproachful tone) to have a large family, and he had come to the conclusion that, as at Bedford there were accessible schools, it would be cheaper to go and live there. To get cheap education for them would be better than living rent-free at Stevenage. Harper's charity did not have justice done to it that day.

On reaching Wellington Street one day to attend a council meeting, I found Mr. Dickens alone. Though he was always most kind to me, and liked to talk of the *Daily News* for instance, I felt rather alarmed, for I knew he would insist on business being done. The minute-book records three resolutions as having been passed at that meeting. We waited a while, talking about things in the papers, and then Mr. Dickens, in an inimitably funny way, remarked: "Will you move me in the chair?" "I will," I answered, "I know you can be trusted to keep

order in a large gathering." Then came resolutions, carried after discussion ; little speeches in the imitated voice of absent members, the appropriate gravity never departed from. My share was insignificant, but it served to supply Mr. Dickens with hints and texts to keep the fun going. I have often wished a reporter had been in hiding.

Dickens's sense of decorum, of what was proper when the public gaze was upon him, gave him, as a rule, a somewhat hard and indifferent expression when he appeared as a speaker or reader. There was one occasion, however, when the man himself was revealed. This was at the brilliant gathering in 1867 to wish him God-speed on his departure for America. While Lord Lytton and Lord Chief-Justice Cockburn were eulogising him, he seemed really pained, and his eyes softened again and again as they fell upon the faces of distinguished men sitting in various parts of the room, or on the emblazoned titles of his works placed among the decorations. When he came to respond there was no trace of the actor, or, in one sense, of the artist. What he said came straight from the heart. The music of his voice ; his manner, which was perfect, carried away his audience, and never perhaps has a speech been more successful.

Dickens's speeches were never written and learned off by heart, like so many orations, as the following letter shows :—

GAD'S HILL PLACE,  
HIGHAM, BY ROCHESTER, KENT,  
*Tuesday, Twenty-First September, 1869.*

DEAR MR. ROBINSON—Your letter has duly reached me here this morning.

I have already assured two correspondents from

Birmingham, representing Birmingham newspapers, that I shall have no manuscript address in my possession, and that such notes as I make on such occasions would be illegible to every one but myself.

But if any gentleman from the *Daily News* should be sent down to report me, I will readily place myself at his disposal immediately after the meeting, and will go over his notes with him if he should require it, or give him any other facility in my power.—Faithfully yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

Dickens was an excellent speaker : as a reader, he was great. Half-neglected corners in the pieces he selected were lighted up by his talent as an actor, and groups of well-defined beings were revealed to hundreds who were probably scarcely aware of their existence. In "A Christmas Carol," when Dickens threw himself into Bob Cratchit, leaning over the elbow-rest upon the reading-table, with a meek, subdued voice and a mild, timid expression of countenance, he gave an instantaneous impression of the poor, feeble, struggling clerk. In "The Chimes" he personified the group consisting of Alderman Cute, Filer, and the red-faced man, by rapid gradations of voice which were perfect. That voice had wonderful flexibility. Whether as a wheezy porter, or the vacant Toots, or the Boots at the inn (where it sounded as though he was chewing a straw), or the pompous Pecksniff, or the oily Mr. Mould, or the judge in the Pickwick trial, or little Paul Dombey, the reader managed to convey the exact impression required, and with the utmost apparent ease.

Of the personal esteem, the affection even, that was felt for Dickens in his lifetime, by people who were strangers to him, here is an anecdote told by

his son, Mr. Henry Fielding Dickens, the distinguished K.C. As readers of Forster's biography know, Dickens used to take an interest in the sports of the young men in the neighbourhood of his Kentish home; played cricket with them and acted as president of their club. As he was sitting in the tent one afternoon keeping the score, a sergeant of the line came in, and making a bow said: "Is Mr. Charles Dickens here?" "Yes," said Dickens, "here I am." The soldier waited a moment and said: "I ask your pardon, sir, but may I look at you for a little while so as to get your features in my mind?" "Oh, certainly," replied Dickens; "I will go on with my score." The soldier waited a minute or two and then said: "It would be a great honour, sir, if I might shake your hand." "There's my hand," said Dickens, "and all the luck in the world to you." "Good-bye, sir, and God bless you," was the reply; "I'm going to India this week." Dickens said that no other compliment ever touched him as that did.

Dickens loved his children and was beloved by them in return. When his son Henry Fielding returned from Cambridge, having gained a scholarship of £50 a year at Trinity Hall, Dickens met him at the station and drove him to Gad's Hill with their dogs bounding by the side of the trap. About half-way on the journey he suddenly put out his hand, and grasping that of his son, with tears in his eyes said, "God bless you, my boy."

One of Robinson's oldest literary acquaintances was the gifted but eccentric Horne, commonly called "Orion" Horne, after his famous farthing epic. The story goes that a boy, entering the publishing office one day, threw down a penny and

called : " A penn'orth of Orions, please." It was Horne who was said by Douglas Jerrold to have treated his wife, after he left her and went to Australia, with *unremitting* kindness. Mrs. Horne declared that she got a bulky letter from him one day, and on opening it found, not the money-order she expected, but specimens of some Australian insect which her husband had sent for her inspection. Horne was an indefatigable worker and a very able writer, yet of all his productions only his farthing epic is remembered, and that is no longer read.

Other early friends were Charles Lever, the dashing author of *Harry Lorrequer*, and Henry Crabbe Robinson, who died at the advanced age of ninety-two in 1867. Lever wrote in 1872 : " I am getting so much worse that I have given up all expectation of getting round. I cannot leave my room, nor shall I, except for the churchyard." This letter came as a great shock. Previous to that time Lever had always been of a joyous, happy nature, witty, sunny-tempered, and kind-hearted. The last time Robinson had met him was at a supper-party given by a common friend in London to some twenty literary men. Lever did not look well. His stoutness had increased, and his complexion had not its accustomed healthy hue. But his spirits were high ; he sang splendidly, and told stories of his diplomatic life with exquisite point. Of his last book, *Lord Kilgobbin*, he was specially proud, though a part of it was written when he was broken-hearted from the death of his wife.

Crabbe Robinson talked freely of his recollections of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, Moore, Byron, and other literary celebrities. His Sunday

breakfasts attracted many writers of a later generation. A few days before he died the nonagenarian expressed the fear that his mind might decay before his body. He had seen this calamity happen in the case of not a few of his old friends, but his own intellect was unclouded until the moment when he passed peacefully away. Only a month before, he had been with his man-servant to Drury Lane Theatre, and, speaking afterwards of the performances, humorously said that modern actors did not speak so loudly as their predecessors.

In looking over names of literary men, and especially of novelists, who have flourished during the years referred to in the present volume, it is impossible not to derive an impression of the transitory character of literary fame. Who now reads the novels of Anthony Trollope, Charles Reade, or Wilkie Collins? There are "booms" in writers as in Stock Exchange securities, and each one, unless he is in the very highest rank, has his day. Mr. Anthony Hope, even after his first success, being still a young man, hesitated, as he told Robinson, whether he would devote himself to literature or the law. Stevenson died just at the right time for his fame, and the romantic story of the man and the circumstances of his death go far to explain the wonderful sensation that death caused. With Alexandre Dumas, who captivated not his countrymen alone, but the entire world, and who will live perhaps for centuries after Stevenson is consigned to oblivion, the case was different; he died during the Franco-German War, and was dismissed by the papers with obituary notices of a few lines.

Few novelists of the Victorian era surpassed

Mrs. Oliphant, whose quiet, thoughtful sketches of English people and scenes are, however, little read at present. Her life was quite a tragedy. Towards the close of it her children, for whom she had worked so hard after their father's death, were no more. In a letter written by her in 1895, she said she rose every morning with nothing but a day of gloomy thoughts before her, and work was a necessity to stave them off. She longed for death. Poor lady! She was of a gentle, kind, affectionate disposition. On one occasion she told a curious story concerning one of her books, *Kirsteen*. She asked a friend to look over a number of letters for her previous to her starting for the East, and in the rummaging, a letter from the late Mr. Blackwood, written in 1885, was found. It related to a proposal for a Scottish story for his magazine. "Did you ever write it?" asked the friend. "Why, dear me," said Mrs. Oliphant, "I believe I did, but I can't remember whether it was published. What did I do with it? Mr. Blackwood died and I fancy the project went off." But she thought and thought and at length said they had better have a search made, as it was her impression that the story was written and not published. After looking into drawers and all sorts of odd receptacles, they came at last to a neat packet of MS. It was *Kirsteen*!

Here are a few thumb-nail sketches of one or two other novelists: Blackmore: "A quaint, homely, solid look with face clean shaven and a frame of white whiskers and beard; like a respectable mason who in a country town has become a leading man in a small dissenting chapel." Charles Reade: "Round head, crisp hair and moustache.



More like a Frenchman than a fellow of Magdalen College. Very tall and very peppery." Trollope : "Of more than average height, rather stout. Iron-grey hair and a face partly covered with moustache and beard. Appearance of an English country gentleman fond of hunting (as he is) rather than a close observer of society in drawing-rooms, as his books pronounce him to be."

Of Thackeray, Robinson saw far less than of Dickens, but he met him occasionally at the Reform Club, of which both were members. Those who know nothing of that large-hearted man personally, are apt to set him down as a cynic, because he lashed the sins and follies of his age. A member of the club was dead, and a little group of men were discussing him with the almost inevitable result. "That's right," said Thackeray. "Kick him. Trample on him. *He's dead.*"

Among historians, Professor Freeman was very stout, the extra weight being distributed equally over his body, so that from every point of the compass he appeared a huge moving mass of flesh. At Oxford the students rather liked to play tricks on him. One day they entered into a disgraceful plot to bring about his discomfiture. He had a loud voice, and in the chapel his tones were always heard above the others in the responses. The arrangement was that the students should be suddenly silent as a particular verse was reached and leave him to speak it alone. The conspiracy was perfectly successful, and, amidst suppressed laughter, in loud, ringing tones, before he could stop himself and foil his enemies, the voice of the bulky professor was heard proclaiming : "Thou

hast beset me behind and before and laid thine hand upon me."

The poets are a race apart in the literary world. What heart-burnings, what jealousies rage in their midst! The greatest are not altogether free from them. "A Banjo Byron" was Browning's description of a rival songster, and the violence of his attack upon Edward FitzGerald is well remembered. Even Tennyson did not disdain to remark petulantly that all could raise the flower now that he had sown the seed. A less illustrious poet was once depreciating Swinburne in company, whereupon some one said: "Well, Swinburne may have his faults, but he has real genius." "Do you think so?" said the other. "Is it anything more than a certain talent and facility of expression?" Well, well; it would certainly not be at all a bad thing if every poet had these things. This same depreciator of the author of *The Song of Italy* had his attention called to an article in the *Quarterly Review*, in which a learned but too ingenious writer, Mr. Churton Collins, showed that certain thoughts in Tennyson are to be found in classic writers; as if experience of life, which, broadly speaking, is the same in all ages, did not cause ideas to be evolved again and again by different minds. The article was duly read and brought back. "I have read this about Tennyson's plagiarisms," said the borrower. "I am afraid—(a sigh)—it is too true."

Tennyson in 1873 is thus described: "He is older than his portraits, and his manner is that of one to whom years have given experience. His voice, without being harsh, does not recall the most musical sounds one has heard. He is

genuinely kind and thoughtful of others. He is far from suggesting the 'school-miss Alfred' satirised in the 'New Timon,' but there is about him an abstracted air which is supposed to harmonise with intellectual life. He usually wears a curious hat with a flat brim, and his heavy spectacles, pointed beard, and thick blue cloak give him a foreign air. Mr. Tennyson is as fond in these days of philosophy as of poetry, and the Metaphysical Society contributes greatly to the enlivenment of his leisure."

Mr. Matthew Arnold was tall, about six feet high. His dark hair was parted in the middle, and he usually had a rather sarcastic smile on his refined features. He was habitually a very courteous man. The American people somehow did not take to him, and his lectures in the United States were not a success. It was wickedly said that one evening a gentleman came rather late, and after paying for admission was being shown into the lecture-room, when the attendant, with his hand on the curtains at the door, said in a low tone: "I'll ask you to be as quiet as you can as you go up the room, as the audience are asleep." At Matthew Arnold's death, a gentleman who wrote under the same surname, although his own genuine patronymic was a far more ancient one, exclaimed on hearing the news: "Poor Matt! He was the head of our clan."

Mr. Frederick Locker, or Locker-Lampson as he afterwards called himself, was in his later years one of the most melancholy of men, although his verses afforded so much pleasure to others. How delightfully quaint are his verses "To my Grandmother"!—

Were Romney's limning true,  
 What a lucky dog were you,  
 Grandpapa !

And how pathetic is his account of the poor woman who has a crippled child !—

The widow's mite, ay, so sustained,  
 She battled onward nor complained,  
 Tho' friends were fewer :  
 And while she toiled for daily fare,  
 A little crutch upon the stair  
 Was music to her.

Locker was twice happily married, and had no worldly troubles, but he conceived a distaste for life, in consequence of some obscure mental disease. Passing through Clement's Inn one day with a friend, he read a public notice : "Persons with burdens not admitted." "Happy place !" was his comment, "where no one has burdens." Towards the end of his life he used to tell his friends that he would soon be well. He really meant that he was getting nearer the grave. Such was his kindly nature that even in his last moments of existence his sole thought was how he could save trouble to others—a subject on which he was quite morbidly anxious.

One of the few books of verses ever written in collaboration was that known as the *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, and a strange form of collaboration it was. Sir Theodore Martin declared that many of the separate ballads were written jointly by himself and Professor Aytoun. One would begin, and the other finish it. The ballads were first published in book form in America, and it was only after that that the authors thought they might be worth something more than a place in old magazines.

Their success was very great. Sir Theodore Martin, however, found more lucrative employment than in writing verses. As a leading Parliamentary agent he made, he said, over £20,000 a year.

In connection with literature, autograph-hunters are an interesting study. Their wives are wonderful. One man will profess to have discovered an error in a date, or suggests that he may negotiate a translation. Others implore that their curiosity may be satisfied about the source of a quotation. Young ladies hint at their affections having been conquered: American girls are specially clever at this. William Black and Bret Harte being with Robinson at Brighton, the first named said the only letter of the kind he had ever had that appeared genuine was from two sisters, who described their home on the banks of the Hudson and depicted their white-haired mother as joining them in their request that if he was ever "their way" he would pass a few days at their house. Alas! as Black began to read bits of the letter, Harte took up the strain and finished it. He had received an identical epistle.

One collector, bolder than most, pursued Harte into his bathroom! This man had not the delicate artistic sense of a Newcastle man who wrote to a whole lot of distinguished authors saying he was a shipowner and that he proposed to give each one's name to some vessel. *That* drew them. Thomas Carlyle "hoped the vessel would sail in larger and deeper waters than he had reached," and all sorts of sentiment came flowing in. The villain to whom it was addressed has as strange a collection of autographs probably as any one living.

## CHAPTER XXI

Law and the lawyers—Lord Coleridge : his epigrams—Lord Russell of Killowen—Pigott trial : a daring experiment—The Tichborne case ; the Claimant's failure as a politician—Secret history of the Phoenix Park murder trials : dramatic interview—Some popular Judges—Etiquette of Counsel's fees—Strange true story of Sir John Bridge—Mr. Barstow's wit.

“ I LIKE a judge out of court ” was one of Robinson's sayings. As a rule, judges have interesting experiences : first during their early struggles when the brief-bag is a superfluity, then on circuit, then in their court, where, if they are at all observant, they may obtain so deep an insight into human nature. Let us give some account of two Lord Chief-Justices of England, Lord Coleridge and Lord Russell of Killowen, than whom in most respects no two men could be more unlike. Lord Coleridge was a tall thin man, with a long, rather red face. His extreme courtesy was almost a defect. Just as it was said that no one could possibly be so wise as Thurlow looked, so it seemed hardly in human nature to be so modest, so amiable, so conciliatory as Lord Coleridge appeared to be. “ But who am I ? ” he seemed to say, as he waved his hand in a deprecating way ; “ I am no one.” The fine literary taste which is an inheritance in his family, and the majestic

eloquence always at his command, gave dignity to the great post he held. He had a soft, musical voice and a suggestive manner that made his conversation delightful. Sometimes, but rarely, he would say a severe thing, to which he gave epigrammatic point. Of an eminent lawyer, noted for cleverness rather than modesty or other engaging qualities, he said that he was "almost a statesman, almost a lawyer, and almost a gentleman."

One of his anecdotes had reference to Mr. Gladstone, who boasted to him in reply to a direct question that he had been more than once flogged at Eton by Dr. Keate. The veteran statesman more than apologised for Keate, and declared that his floggings did not hurt him very much. Like most lawyers, Lord Coleridge rather liked a little joke against his own profession. When in America, he met Mr. Evarts, who, he said, in addressing a meeting of lawyers once observed: "It is sometimes alleged, my friends, that we lawyers flay our clients. What a mistake! We do not flay them. If we did, they would die, and that would never do. No, we do much better. We fleece them, and then the fleece grows and we fleece them again." Mr. Justice Mathew told a good story of Lord Coleridge. The Lord Chief was talking with apprehension of the probable appointment of a sturdy, muscular, loud-voiced lawyer to the bench. "What shall I do if he sits with me?" he said. "I shall not be able to get five minutes' sleep." For some reason, he had taken a dislike to the *Times* newspaper. A friend who met him at dinner, and who happened to have found this out, once said with an innocent air: "But, Lord

Coleridge, if you confine your newspaper-reading to the *Times*, you may miss things occasionally." "You will be surprised to know," he said, with his most urbane smile, "that I have not had a copy of the *Times* in my house for many years." Those in the secret chuckled to see how easily the old lawyer was drawn.

On one occasion Robinson, being then editor as well as manager of the *Daily News*, spent an evening with him and greatly enjoyed his conversation, there being no indication in the judge's manner that there was anything amiss. That he was even commonly civil, however, was surprising, considering that he had that day sent back a letter full of insolent abuse of him in his private and public character, which purported to have been forwarded on to him "with the compliments of the editor of the *Daily News*." It was a vile, anonymous production, apparently by some person whose mind was unhinged, and the only proper thing to do would have been to pitch it into the waste-paper basket. No such letter had ever reached Bouverie Street, and the suggestion that it had was evidently made by the writer in order to secure attention. Lord Coleridge's letter was as follows :—

1 SUSSEX SQUARE, HYDE PARK, W.,  
June 26, 1893.

DEAR SIR—I return you this somewhat incoherent outburst of hatred and malevolence. I have had for so many years such constant proof of your generosity and good-will shown by you and your predecessors, that I have some difficulty in understanding why you sent it to me. Much of the latter part is altogether above my head ; I cannot even guess to what the writer alludes. The body of the letter expresses opinions with which it can hardly



be expected I should trouble myself, even if they did not come in the cowardly and despicable form of anonymous abuse.—Believe me to be, dear Sir, your faithful servant,  
COLERIDGE.

Of course the matter was set right, and Lord Coleridge wrote a second letter couched in a most friendly spirit. But only to think that all the time he was smiling and talking as though nothing unusual had occurred, he must have thought the person he was addressing had been guilty towards him of what amounted to a gross insult!

Lord Russell of Killowen had none of the literary culture that belonged to Lord Coleridge, although he was an equally fine orator. He was of commanding presence, and he had a magnificent voice. In his finest efforts there was a look of passionate earnestness in his eyes that was deeply impressive, and he was known to extract tears from persons not ordinarily susceptible. Of the smallness of his reading various tales are told. One day a friend pointed out Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to him, and he begged that the author might be presented to him. "I should so like to know him," he said. Lord Russell shook him warmly by the hand and told him how gratified he had been by his "work." It turned out that the only work of Sir Arthur's of which the judge had ever heard was the little one-act drama called "Waterloo." It is an admirable little piece, no doubt, and it provides Sir Henry Irving with one of his very finest parts, but it is hardly on that that the author's reputation rests. Lord Russell was fond of the racecourse and the theatre, and he played an excellent game of whist.

As a cross-examiner, in the days when he was the acknowledged leader of the Bar, he was perhaps unrivalled. To see him handle a crafty, shuffling witness was a rare study. His powerful intellect would open up one by one the lying corners of a cunning mind, and compel the deceiver to lay bare the truth. This was not done in the old way, by bullying or threats, but by closely following up each answer, by allowing no evasion, by firmly insisting upon the reconciliation of conflicting statements or their abandonment. What a dramatic moment that was in the Pigott case when Sir Charles Russell, as he then was, called upon that despicable forger to write down certain words, and the Court waited for the result! These words had been misspelt in the incriminated correspondence, and counsel's aim was to see whether he would misspell them again and so betray the authorship. There was one word in particular which the forger had always spelt wrong—"hesitancy." He spelt it "hesitency." Would he do so now? When he had finished writing, the piece of paper was handed to the three judges, who betrayed no sign as they looked at it.

Sir Frank Lockwood, who was in the case with Russell, said afterwards that he could scarcely restrain himself. Everything had been staked on the result. The Court was in suspense. Russell did not move. He rested his arm on the bench, and Lockwood grasped it, holding it all the time. The game was won. But the move was more than daring; it was rash. At least two judges afterwards pronounced Russell's action to have been very dangerous, and they would hardly admit that it had been justified even by so splendid a

success. All the misspellings, four in number, were reproduced.

Lord Russell's manner, even when not on the bench, was commanding, not to say imperious. In his latter years he became rather testy, no doubt owing to the progress of the terrible malady to which eventually he succumbed ; and at the theatre, where he was frequently seen in the stalls, few persons who knew him were venturesome enough to incommode him by squeezing by him to get to their seats.

A case that excited the public mind even more than the Parnell Commission was that of the Tichborne claimant. The length of time during which the proceedings were dragged out was a public scandal. Newspaper proprietors, however, would have been the last to complain. The best friend they ever had was that huge mass of flesh, the fat Wapping butcher, whose claim to be the lost Sir Roger Tichborne, long as he kept the lawyers going, never stood a moment's examination. In this case the acuteness of another Lord Chief-Justice, Sir A. Cockburn ; his memory, his breadth of view, his strong common sense, together with his physical vigour, were marvellously displayed. No one who was in Court during the trial at Bar can have forgotten the mobile features, the piercing eyes, and the musical voice of the presiding judge. His attention never relaxed for one moment, and his summing-up was a masterpiece of reasoning and exposition.

Mr. Hawkins, now Lord Brampton, was wonderful as the prosecuting counsel, his little dramatic representations of the manner in which he supposed much of the evidence for the defence

to have been concocted, creating great amusement. Dr. Kenealy was diffuse, illogical, wildly inaccurate. He had, in short, all the worst faults a counsel could have, and it always seemed to the listener that he was talking merely to waste time. The burly Claimant, who sat in what is called the well of the Court, which was then at Westminster, affected the utmost contempt for the proceedings, and would frequently cut figures of men and quadrupeds out of paper with a pair of scissors. Hawkins's cross-examination, on the whole, was very successful, but at least on one occasion he got more than he bargained for. He was asking a hostile witness what happened on an occasion when he had seen some one connected with the case, and the man pretended to be reluctant to answer. The judge being appealed to, ordered him to speak out. Thereupon the witness said: "He says: 'Why don't you come over to 'Orkins's side,' he says, 'you'll find it answer.'" There were roars of laughter. Another witness, by way of emphasising the solemnity of an oath, declared that he was ready to swear to something on "a sackful of Bibles."

On his release from prison after serving rather more than eleven years of the fourteen years which formed his sentence, the Claimant was unrecognisable. The man-mountain had become a slim, elderly, decent-looking man with grey hair and beard. He appeared at St. James's Hall and made a curious, rambling, illiterate sort of speech in which, after he had referred to his supposed grievances, he put forth a sort of political programme, the most noteworthy feature in which was the declaration that no secret service money

should be voted by Parliament unless it was distinctly stated in what way it was to be spent. The political programme fell flat. He was as one crying in the wilderness, for during his eleven years' duress the public had all but forgotten him.

The circumstances connected with the assassination of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke in Phoenix Park, Dublin, by members of a secret society called the Invincibles, are too well remembered to need recapitulation. There are some facts connected with the apprehension and trial of the guilty men, however, which are not generally known, and are given here on high authority. In beginning the prosecutions the Irish Government brought forward a charge of simple conspiracy. They suspected the real facts, but had no evidence. Mr. Murphy (afterwards the Judge), who was counsel for the prosecution, hit upon a daring method of securing what he wanted. In applying to the magistrate for a remand to a certain date, he added—putting as much significance as he could into his words—“by which time, your worship, I have little doubt that I shall have evidence which no one can gainsay, of the participation of the prisoners in a much more serious crime.” At this, the prisoners in the dock turned to each other in distrust, but each declared, in whispers, that he had said nothing. However, no sooner was he in his cell than Curley, one of the accused, told a warder that he wanted to speak to Mr. —, the solicitor for the prosecution.

The solicitor at once went to Mr. Murphy, who observed that Curley would not make a good

witness. The object, above all, was to get Carey, if possible, to turn informer. He was the ablest man of the batch, and knew more than all the others put together. Whereupon the following plan was devised : Carey's cell door was left open, and the warder and the solicitor (the latter well known to Carey) stopped there, and the solicitor, stepping partly in, the warder exclaimed : " No, Mr. —, that is not Curley's cell ; it is two doors farther on." Carey sprang up and burst out : " What's that ? Are you going to see Curley ? " " I am," said the solicitor, " he has sent for me." " Oh, that's his game, is it ? " said Carey excitedly. " You stop here, Mr. —. I know a great deal more than he does. I can tell you everything." Thereupon the solicitor observed that if Carey's evidence was accepted, it must be on the condition that he did not assist with his own hand in the murder, and that he must tell no lies. " If," said Mr. —, " we detect you in any false statement, we shall at once put you in the dock."

Carey agreed, and then followed the revelations which startled the whole kingdom. Curley never saw the solicitor, and so he was speaking the truth, as to the letter, when he denied that he ever confessed. Carey was equally speaking the truth when he said with a laugh, as he passed the dock in which Curley was hooting him : " I was beforehand with you, Dan, wasn't I ? "

One of the ablest lawyers and the most amiable of men, Lord Justice Rigby, was not altogether a success as Attorney-General. At the bar he was a powerful advocate, sought after by all the chief litigants of his time, but somehow his manner in the House of Commons disposed to mirth. He

had a habit of emphasising little words, conjunctions and prepositions and so forth; and then he had a bulky figure and an air of blank simplicity like Mr. Pickwick, at which his opponents used to scoff. Parliamentary life did not suit him. He hated the late hours. Never in his life, he once said, had he attended to business after dinner until he entered the House of Commons. "What! have you never looked at a brief before going to bed?" he was asked. "No," was the reply, "I never once did so. I got up the earlier in the morning." Such a case is perhaps unique in its way.

Another popular judge was the late Vice-Chancellor Malins—the same who said once, when a lunatic threw an egg at him in court, that it must have been meant for his brother Bacon. The judge was not a great lawyer. In fact, so often were his judgments over-ruled on appeal, that when, in February 1879, he was thrown from his horse for the third or fourth time, the wags of the Bar nicknamed the animal the Lord Justice because he had so often "upset" the Vice-Chancellor. However, "Dicky" Malins, as he was called, was a great favourite, and half the Bar called upon him the Sunday after the accident to see how he fared. A layman profanely suggested that this popularity was due to the fact that Malins found so much work for them.

Sir Harry Poland is highly esteemed, although not in all probability by those numerous persons whom it has been his duty to prosecute or sentence for offences against the law. With his many years' experience in connection with Treasury prosecutions, he has an abundant store of interesting

recollections. The responsibility of a Recorder as regards the sentences he has to pronounce used to weigh rather heavily upon him. In one instance, when sitting at Dover, he sentenced two men to six months' imprisonment. He felt so uncomfortable about this, however, after he got to his hotel, that he sent for the men the next morning and reduced their sentences to three months.

Law and equity, we know, are supposed to have been fused by the Judicature Act of thirty years ago. Nevertheless, they are not always even now on speaking terms. Within the last few years a learned Chancery judge actually has been heard to declare that he had never in his life been present at a criminal trial. Being asked whether he had never had the curiosity to look in, say at the Tichborne trial or some other *cause célèbre*, he said he had never had time, he had been so busy.

On Grand Day of Easter Term 1895, Robinson was one of the guests entertained by the Treasurer and Benchers of Lincoln's Inn—a compliment he highly appreciated. On these occasions it is the custom for a Bencher to be told off to look after each guest and ensure his comfort. Mr. Pember, a very successful barrister in Parliamentary practice, was selected to entertain him. Sir Edward Clarke, whom he knew very well, was there; also Sir Richard Webster (Lord Alverstone), whom he knew slightly. The latter was extremely polite, notwithstanding the fact that he was then engaged in politics and was being unmercifully attacked in the *Daily News*. In the June of the following year came a similar invitation from the Benchers of the Middle Temple. The guests included the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Kimberley, the



Governor of the Bank of England, and Mr. Dicksee, R.A. On neither of these occasions were legal matters discussed, from which it might be inferred that, unlike members of Parliament and others of His Majesty's lieges, lawyers are not unduly addicted to talking "shop."

The question of lawyers' fees that are not earned is a very old and a very vexed one. It is told of a judge no longer living that, when he was elevated to the bench, a solicitor who had sent him the day before a brief with a large fee, called upon him and, with a profusion of apologies, suggested that, as his client was not a rich man, the cheque might be returned. "I should be very glad," said the judge, "to do as you suggest, and quite agree that morally you are right, but in justice to my profession and to avoid establishing a precedent I am obliged to decline." "Ah, my lord," said the solicitor, "we feared you might find yourself in this difficulty, and, to save you any embarrassment, we have stopped the cheque."

One of the most remarkable characters on the magisterial bench during the last fifty years was Sir John Bridge of Bow Street. He was a man of wide learning, but possessed with the strangest prejudices. Did he suspect himself? It is impossible to say. Certain it is that a friend of his who is at the Bar was solemnly pledged to inform him of the first sign of weakness or forgetfulness or slowness in grasping detail. A word or look from that barrister, and the magistrate would have thrown up his functions. Bridge was one of the best of friends, but when, towards the end of his career, he denounced the Society for the Protection of Children and the Humane Society, one of them at least felt

inclined to say : "The time has come. I must send for his barrister friend."

Mr. Barstow, the magistrate, had a very pretty wit. One day he was travelling by railway, and the weather was bitterly cold. A passenger getting into his carriage trod on his foot. "I beg your pardon," said the magistrate, "my toe *is* frozen, but it will not *bear*."

## CHAPTER XXII

Preachers and theologians—Spread of liberal views—F. D. Maurice—Charles Kingsley—Dean Stanley—Dr. James Martineau—Professor Jowett—Mr. Spurgeon—Moody and Sankey—"Hang Theology" Rogers—Mr. Frederic Harrison on the origin of a myth—The Metaphysical Society—Clerical anecdotes.

MR. GLADSTONE spoke with knowledge when he attributed to Queen Victoria some share in the liberalizing of the Scottish Church. The observation might have been extended to the English Church as well. In religious as in other matters the Queen's views were greatly influenced by those of her consort, who was a broad-minded theologian. Two volumes of religious dissertations so entirely free from dogmas that they might, with the very slightest of alterations, have formed the subject matter of sermons by Dr. Channing or any other Unitarian preacher, were translated from the German and published with the direct sanction of Her Majesty. They were called *Meditations on Death and Eternity* and *Meditations on Life and its Religious Duties*, and the translator, Miss F. Rowan, dedicated them to "H.R.H. the Princess Louise of Hesse, Princess Alice of Great Britain and Ireland, whose young life has already given evidence of the religious earnestness and sincerity inculcated in these meditations."

We must have travelled a long way in the forty years or more since the publication of these harmless pious reflections under royal patronage created quite a little flutter in strictly orthodox quarters. There is a brief record from our diaries of a conversation with a dignitary of the Church in the year of grace 1895 :—

Canon —— proved an interesting companion. We talked a good deal about religion. His orthodoxy is of the queerest kind, and seemed to me quite at variance with his creed. Eternal punishment was a horror ; he would worship no God who could decree it. Christ was the Son of God ; but then we were all sons of God, and of precisely the same nature. I asked him plainly how he could, with such views, drag after him the mass of Church beliefs—Adam, the Fall, the destruction of animals under the notion that the Deity liked the smoke of sacrifices, and the rest. He said they were educational : it seemed necessary that tutelage of this sort should be permitted. I do not like such sophistry, but such men no doubt are leavening the Established Church.

That there are clergymen, few though they may be, who can openly proclaim such views as these, is surely significant of the change to which reference has been made. Time was when the slightest suspicion of heterodoxy was almost as injurious to a preacher as a conviction for shop-lifting. Among dissenters, Dr. Campbell, in his paper the *British Standard*, established a sort of reign of terror, and even Mr. Binney was proclaimed, and had to have recourse to a voyage to Australia until suspicions were allayed. As regards the Church, Maurice lost his professorship at King's College for doubting the eternity of future punishments, and Kingsley was thought so heterodox that

after a sermon he preached in a London church, the regular clergyman rose and told the congregation he must protest against the sentiments they had just heard expressed. Were those eminent men alive now, it is safe to say that they might enjoy their position within the Establishment without a whisper being heard against them. As a matter of fact, none of the crowd who hounded down Bishop Colenso hissed and howled more loudly than these twain.

The relaxation of former safeguards in respect of doctrine, however, is only one aspect of the matter. We have grown more tolerant all round. The clergy are far more willing now than they formerly were to admit that good can come even of the ministrations of men not within the fold of the Church. Bishops are less prone, as a rule, when in mixed company, to assume that every one present is of their way of thinking, to harp upon what "the Church says" or what "the Church permits," and to suggest that outside that particular Church there is no salvation.

Dean Stanley, who was a great favourite at Court, was the most notable Broad Churchman of his day. He was of diminutive stature, with a bright glance, a happy, refined countenance, and a voice that could fill his beloved Abbey. There was about him a look of decision that came perhaps of his battles with the fierce lions of Convocation. No better custodian could have been found for the resting-place of illustrious Englishmen. He had no prejudices. We have no right, he held, to consider what views happened to be held by one who has done faithful service to his fellow-countrymen. Nay more, he even thought that

moral defects should not exclude them. "If Byron was turned away from our doors," he said, "many a one as questionable as Byron has been admitted. Close above the monument of Granville Sharp is the monument of the epicurean St. Evremond. The godlike gift of genius was recognised; the baser earthly part was left to the merciful judgment of its Creator." The Dean was proud of the fact that David Garrick found a resting-place in the Abbey. No actor, however, since Garrick's time has been similarly honoured.

Dean Stanley as a preacher appealed to the mind rather than to the feelings, in which respect he greatly resembled Dr. James Martineau, as indeed he did in others, wide apart as their respective creeds were supposed to be. It is said of Dr. Martineau, that his presence in a company always kept the conversation on a high level. He was tall, thin, ascetic-looking, with a mild, benevolent manner. As a writer, few men equalled him for beauty of style, pureness of thought, poetic expression, or richness of illustration. As a preacher, he was less effective than many men immeasurably inferior to him in intellectual powers.

Professor Jowett, who sometimes occupied the pulpit in the Abbey, was a very interesting preacher, but his voice was monotonous. He went up the pulpit stairs determining to be heard, and the only way in which he could secure his end was to speak as loudly as he could. It was painful to note his exertions. Every word was thrown out with all the force he could muster. The true orator can do without shouting. Nature has given him the power. Take for instance Mr. Spurgeon. He once preached at the Crystal Palace to 20,000

persons. Whichever way you looked you saw a mass of human beings. His wife sat immediately below his pulpit. She grew frightened, and began to shed tears. Mr. Spurgeon observed her, and calling some one to him, sent a message asking her to sit where she could not look at him, and after she had moved her nervousness passed away. So little did he exert himself that it was difficult to believe that the people at the rim of the circle could hear, but they could all the same. When the doxology after the sermon had been sung, the great Baptist preacher, with the familiarity which seems to be allowed to particular men, said : " No, no ; that will not do. Not half of you have been singing. Let us have the words again, and let every one join. Mr. Organist, please play the verse once more." The organ was at the extreme end—scarcely in sight. The organist looked like a black dot. But he heard the little stout man in the pulpit, and turning round to the keys, sent forth a glorious volume of music.

At first, five thousand persons perhaps had sung. The second time, the five thousand became twenty thousand. It was a wonderful sight to see enormous regiments of singers suddenly joining the rest. While listening to Mr. Spurgeon's more impassioned passages his hearers were spell-bound, and it was difficult to believe that this was the man who just before had been causing a roar of laughter with some happy remark or well-told anecdote. The spirit of fun within him was irrepressible. When he was gathering in subscriptions towards the building of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he said that he was like the man who was going to be hanged, and who said : " It is only for once, and I

want to have it well done." Mr. Spurgeon could joke about everlasting punishment, in which nevertheless he was a devout believer.

Another man in the first rank of popular preachers was Moody, the American revivalist. In April 1884 he and Mr. Sankey drew a congregation of about 5000 people to a temporary building near the Addison Road station. Mr. Sankey's voice was worn and thick, and the singing formed too considerable a part of the proceedings. One piece after another was sung ; sometimes with Sankey alone, to the wretched accompaniment of a harmonium played by himself ; sometimes by Sankey and the choir, and occasionally by the congregation. The people, however, by no means joined in to the extent that is common among the Salvation Army. At one moment Sankey asked "the men" alone to sing, and perhaps two hundred out of the vast mass did so ; then he called upon "the women" alone, and still fewer voices were heard. Altogether, this part of the service was a disappointment. Mr. Moody had grown stout, so stout that he appeared unfit for any active life ; yet at that time he still slaved to an extent perhaps not equalled by any other religious teacher. He called upon two gentlemen in succession to pray, and in both cases the language used was reverential and simple.

Moody was extremely impressive. He had none of the graces of oratory ; his voice was even against him, and it was not often that he varied his tones. Nevertheless, his intense earnestness, his nervous language, rising frequently to true eloquence, his picturesqueness and pathos, went straight to the hearts of his hearers, and the



spectacle from the platform of thousands of human faces all turned towards him, and changing expression as if by magic as he developed his theme, was one never to be forgotten. By way of illustrating one of his points, he told a touching story of a friend of his who once heard two children explaining to a third who was blind the contents of a shop window on Christmas, and as he spoke there were few dry eyes in the great building.

A well-known preacher in her day was the notorious Laura Bell, who, having married a young scion of the aristocracy, turned pious in her maturer years, and was particularly interested in the work of reclaiming young women. Mr. Gladstone believed in her, and was more than once present at her meetings. Her manner was pleasant, but there was little thought in anything she said. She was always very elegantly dressed, and lived in good style. At a midnight meeting on one occasion an incident happened that rather disconcerted her. She was speaking of the folly of a life of sin, when a girl called out : " Come, come, Laura ; *you* haven't done so badly."

One of the most popular clergymen of the Church of England was the Rev. William Rogers—" Hang-Theology " Rogers was his suggestive nickname—the Rector of Bishopsgate. Here is an account of a pleasant evening at his old-world residence :—

I spent a delightful evening towards the close of 1894 at the house of the Rev. W. Rogers at his rectory in Devonshire Square, Bishopsgate. The effect of sitting there, as at the centre of a gigantic spider's web of houses, was in itself very novel to me. The silence in the very midst of the biggest city in the world was almost uncanny.

He receives his visitors in the most genial way conceivable. He was crippled by an accident, and has to be assisted when he leaves his chair, but in mind he is as bright as youth itself. Ex-Judge Denman sat at his right at dinner, and there is something touching in the friendship of the two, born, I believe, in the same year, 1819. One was at Oxford and the other at Cambridge, but they were always friends, and the Latin inscription on the plate lately presented to the good rector was written by the judge by common consent.

Rogers himself spoke with animation of the old days of Liberalism in the City. I drew him out on that head. In one of his stories he said, in referring to somebody's speech: "After talking about the Church or *something*, he went on to," etc. The little bit "the Church or something," very good-humouredly said, but with just a touch of contempt, was very characteristic. During the talk at the dinner-table, there was a notable illustration of how stories obtain currency. One gentleman said he knew a young fellow who, at a University examination in Scripture, was called upon for the meaning of a certain Greek word repeated twice in the text (I forget what it was. Say it was "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs"), and who could only think of one instance of such a repetition, and accordingly replied: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" the real meaning being so directly the opposite as to make the whole thing inexpressibly ludicrous.

When this story was told, Mr. Frederic Harrison, who sat next to me, suddenly observed: "I'm responsible for that story. I may be said to have invented it." He went on to narrate that after finishing an examination in Roman Law that particular day at the University, he met in the street the young fellow in question, and asked him how he had been getting on with his papers. The youth then told him laughingly how he had been puzzled to think of the best way to render the Greek phrase referred to, and that it occurred to him at the moment what a good joke it would be if he were to reply, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" This so tickled Harrison that he afterwards told

the story as though that answer actually had been made, without, of course, giving the young man's name.

Defending the Positivist ban upon second marriages, Harrison said that the widower should dwell in his thoughts upon the one who has gone; should visit her grave; imagine her living, and so keep up an unending union. But, I said, how if he wants to forget her? How if every thought of her is painful, and the one thing in the world he wants is never to have a recollection of her in his mind? He had no answer for this except some generalities about exceptional cases.

Denman said he too had invented a story. Some friend observed that he had seen Cardinal Vaughan and Bishop Stubbs talking together at the Athenæum, and he wondered what they had in common. "Oh!" said Denman, "the Bishop has just come back from Rome, and the Cardinal asked what he had been doing there, and Stubbs said: 'I've been dedicating Rome to St. George and the Dragon'; this being a skit upon the Cardinal, who had just before solemnly dedicated England to the Virgin. This story also got about, and will be told as actual and true.

Denman is a splendid-looking man. I recollect him well in the House of Commons, when he sat for Tiverton, as Lord Palmerston's colleague. I drew him out about the celebrated Rowcliffe, the local butcher, who used to heckle Palmerston at the hustings, but who always came off second best. I asked if Rowcliffe ever went for *him*, and he said no. I hinted that perhaps he had appeased the angry Chartist by a week or two of *joints* before the election, but the Judge would not admit of this. Rowcliffe, I suppose, went for higher game, Denman being young and comparatively unknown at that time.

One room at the Bishopsgate Rectory contains an extraordinary cluster of busts, pictures, and photographs arranged under the name of the "Altar of Friendship." These all relate to friends of the rector, and are very interesting. Lord Rosebery is the central and prominent figure.

A sign of the times was the formation some thirty-five years ago of that association of men of widely different opinions, the Metaphysical Society. It originated really with Tennyson, but a number of theologians were drawn into it. Tennyson was concerned at the progress of materialism. Could not a number of men of different religious principles, but of one mind in taking the spiritual as opposed to the hard, scientific side in philosophical speculation, meet together occasionally? He consulted men as wide asunder, intellectually speaking, as the poles—Dr. Martineau and Archbishop Manning, Mr. Mill and Bishop Magee, Professor Huxley and Dean Stanley. With two exceptions, the replies were favourable, and the Metaphysical Society was established. Mr. Mill wrote to say that he thought little good could result from discussions in which more than two persons were engaged. The other refusal was from Professor Huxley.

The members of the Society met once a month at each other's houses. One of the number read a paper, a printed copy of which had been sent to each member beforehand, and a discussion would then take place. It was said that the stricter Catholics were uneasy at the association of Archbishop Manning and Dr. Ward (who was also a member) with men of heretical views. No such results as were dreaded by those persons came about, but that these men should have been included in such a scheme is a remarkable fact in the history of religious and philosophical controversy.

If all preachers do not, like Spurgeon, joke in the pulpit, they are men after all, and enjoy a jest as a rule as much as any one when out of it.

Thus, Bishop Magee remonstrated with a rather fast minister in his diocese about driving tandem, which he considered undecorous. The clergyman said he could not see the difference between driving one horse before the other and driving them in a couple. "My dear sir," said Magee, "when you and I pray for a blessing at the close of our service we put our two hands together thus (folding his hands); the congregation would be very much shocked if we were to put one in front of the other thus" (taking a "sight").

Canon Liddon used to tell how, when he was travelling in Egypt in 1889, he was particularly grateful to a dragoman for his efficient services, and gave him a handsome present at parting. On his return journey the Canon again met the man, who said: "It was very good of you to help me as you did, as it enabled me to do what I had long desired." "And what was that?" asked Liddon. "It enabled me," said the man, "to marry a third wife."

Many clergymen can tell stories of the stupidity or absurdities of their parishioners. One was explaining to an old woman the meaning of the Pentecost. "The spirit, you know," he said, "came down upon them like a mighty wind." "I am very glad I weren't there," said the old woman; "I can't abide the wind." After a sermon in proof of the existence of a Supreme Being, another clergyman spoke to a member of his congregation on the subject. "I hope," he said, "you liked my sermon." "Oh, yes," said the person addressed, a country bumpkin, "it were main clever, but do you know, Sir (apologetically), somehow I can't help believing there *is* a God."

Here is a trait illustrative of character. A lady whose pretensions to gentility were such that she could not bear the idea of the Apostles having been fishermen, told her minister that she believed there was some authority for saying that some of them at least were owners of smacks.

Some stories there are in which the laugh is against the clergy. That this should be so is not surprising; for, just as there is but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, there is but one also from the sacred to the profane, and the element of incongruity almost always enters into any incident that excites laughter. "My friends," said a preacher to his flock, "I have unfortunately omitted to bring the notes of my sermon. I can only therefore do my best, and trust to the inspiration of Almighty God to move me to say something that will be profitable. This afternoon, I trust to be better circumstanced." Another reverend gentleman being at sea in a storm gave expression to his fear of being wrecked. "Do not be alarmed," said the captain. "Hark how my men are swearing. If there was real danger they would not do that." The storm abated, but a few days after there was another, worse than the first. The clergyman was observed to go towards the fore-castle and listen: "Thank God," he presently exclaimed, "I distinctly heard an oath."

Mr. Barrie the novelist tells a story of a strange preacher he once heard. He was a discharged criminal who got up and addressed some of his fellows at a supper given to them. One remarkable feature of the gathering was the fact that the thieves were very strict about credentials, and threw out with much indignation one or two honest men

who had ventured in. After supper one of these thieves, an educated man, perhaps a forger, got up, and after some words of exhortation offered up a prayer. He began to tell the Lord what sinners they all were assembled there that night. "But, O Lord, not merely down here in the hall," he said ; "no, but on the platform. O Lord, what sinners they are ! They conceal their offences from men, but these are all known to Thee. There is the great civic person : what has he not to confess ? And the clergy, Lord ! If Thy mercy does not abound, what a dreadful fate is in store for them !" The man went on in this fashion to such an extent that, in the midst of roars of laughter from his comrades, he was turned out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXIII

Artists and musicians—Artists considered socially—Mr. Frith—Sir F. Leighton—Sir J. E. Millais—Mr. Holman-Hunt's ghost story—Origin of one of Mr. Fildes's paintings—An outing with the Royal Academy Club—The *Punch* artists—Mario, Grisi, etc.—Mlle. Piccolomini—Meyerbeer—Mr. Santley—Sir A. Sullivan's blunder in "The Lost Chord"—Musical neighbours.

ARTISTS and musicians have this at least in common, that they are apt to be devoted to their calling to the exclusion of almost every other aspect of life. Botticelli wrote a commentary on Dante; Benvenuto Cellini could write as well as design; and Sir Joshua Reynolds could easily hold his own in the society of the wits and literary men of the Georgian era. Such men, however, are comparatively rare. A distinguished author now dead used to declare that he had known many artists in his time, and that the only one who was a good talker was Mr. W. P. Frith. Mr. Frith is indeed a brilliant exception. Since he completed his eightieth year he has been known to complain, so it is said, that he was getting to be neglected by the world, because in one whole week he only received three invitations to dine out. Not many years ago he was a short, spare man, with a quick eye and a witty tongue, as blithe as a sparrow. His amusing reminiscences proved so readable that



he was induced to take what stage folk call an encore, and publish a second volume. An excellent notion of the man and his particular kind of humour can be obtained from the work.

Curiously enough, with all his wit and shrewdness, Mr. Frith is, or was, a believer in the Bacon-Shakespeare heresy. This led him to put his foot in it, as the phrase goes, at dinner one day. Sir Henry Irving was present, and dwelt upon the knowledge of the stage revealed by Shakespeare's plays. This proved, Sir Henry thought, that they were the work of a player. "How could Shakespeare, with a common hedge education, know anything of the classics?" asked Frith. "There were translations," Robinson ventured to say. "Not one," said Frith, "not one." Unfortunately for the artist, Mr. Scoones the army coach was of the party. "Why, there were scores," said he, and forthwith proceeded to name a number. Frith laughed, and kept saying he was "sorry he spoke." Strange that so clever and well-informed a man should never have heard even of North's *Plutarch*! Similar misconceptions to that of the Royal Academician are at the bottom of most of the Baconian rubbish that issues from the press. One gentleman present, who knew as much of Shakespeare "as perhaps he does of Greek," was particularly horrified at Frith's impious suggestion, and asked in agonised tones: "What! would you rob me of my Shakespeare?"

As opinions of Mr. Frith's work are much divided nowadays, at all events among the critics (as for the public, they continue to gather in small crowds before his "Derby Day" at the Tate Gallery), it is interesting to record the view of an

artist of widely different genius, Sir L. Alma-Tadema. He was sitting at table at a dinner given to Mr. Colin Hunter by Mr. William Black—on which occasion, by the way, Mr. Abbey drew for the menu card a delightful picture of two girls calling after a *hunter* whose horse was just rising at a gate in the distance. Tadema praised Frith's pictures very warmly, and declared that they were at one time the finest works that English art was producing. But, he added, Frith had stood still and opposed the new school, who had left him behind. Whatever may be thought of the "Derby Day," the "Road to Ruin," and the "Railway Station," there can be no question that they will be referred to in future time as authentic documents relating to the costume and general appearance of English people in Victoria's reign. The pains Frith would take to secure accuracy were astonishing. One day he followed a shabby old man more than a mile before he found an opportunity of negotiating for the purchase of a faded, threadbare coat that would just suit a character he was painting ; and this is only one instance of the kind out of many.

A distinguished artist in modern times who had a reputation for versatility was Sir Frederic Leighton. At the time when he had just been elected President of the Royal Academy, the appointment was being discussed among a group of artists. "He is an excellent linguist," said one. "And he has such pleasant manners!" said another. "He is a splendid public speaker," said a third. "Yes," said Whistler, who was present, "and he *paints* a little." But of course no one ever took Whistler seriously. As regards

Leighton's speeches they were not, as Rosalind says, for "all markets." He would paint and repaint them, as it were, until they reminded one of the cheek of an actress. The effort was almost painfully apparent. As an artist he had many admirers and many detractors. Sitting at dinner one evening next to a lady who did not know him, he was engaged by her in conversation about the Royal Academy. "It is a very poor exhibition this year, don't you think?" said she. "Well," he replied cautiously, "there are poor pictures in it, no doubt." "Yes," said the lady, "the President's 'Phryne in Eleusis' is simply scandalous." "I am sorry you think that," said Leighton, "because I painted it." The lady experienced that sensation known as growing hot and cold all over, and then, as usually happens under such circumstances, she floundered deeper than ever. "Oh, how very silly of me," she said. "The fact is I know nothing whatever about art, and was only repeating *what every one else says*."

Leighton's successor, Sir John Millais, had none of the qualities that make for social success. He talked a great deal, but seldom said anything striking, and he was often brusque in his manner. Queen Victoria's devotion to Scotland and Scotch people was a sore subject with him. "Noel Paton," he said, "stays with her for a week at a time; *I am never invited*." The President of the Royal Academy was allowed to remain a plain "Mr."—and so on. One good story Millais used to tell. He had a visit one day from a wealthy Australian who wanted to have his portrait painted in the best manner, and had been told that Millais was the man. Terms were gone

into, and no objection was raised to the high figure mentioned by the artist as his fee. The visitor said he must refer to his wife as to the size, and then arrange for sittings. A week passed and nothing more was heard of the Australian, and then Millais met him accidentally in Piccadilly. "Oh, Mr. Millais," he said, "I was going to write to you. After I left you, my wife and I saw some beautiful coloured photographs in a shop window in Regent Street, and we liked them so much that we have decided to have one done instead of the painting I was talking to you about."

Mr. Holman-Hunt, a very pleasant-mannered man, one day told a capital ghost story. It was of a lady who wrote to her husband to say that her nights were troubled with a dream in which she found herself wandering over a large house, pacing its galleries, and going in and out its rooms. This continued for a long time, and at length the husband, who was detained in another part of the country, strongly advised that she should leave their home. He had seen a large and suitable house in the neighbourhood in which he was staying, and if she would come and see it they could decide. She took the journey, and together they went to the house. The moment she saw it she exclaimed: "Why, that is the house I see in my dreams!" and on entering it she repeated the exclamation. The housekeeper appeared, and they began to question her as to whether there was anything peculiar in the place. "Well, I won't deny," said the woman, "that people have avoided it lately because they believe it is haunted." "Oh," said the lady in a startled way, "if it is haunted I shall never like to live in it." "*You* need not

fear," said the woman, "for it is you that haunts it."

Mr. Luke Fildes is one of the most conscientious of artists, constantly touching and retouching and obliterating days of work. He once gave an interesting account of the growth of the idea of his fine painting of a widower left alone with his children. One evening, from the door of a cottage where he was lodging, he saw a workman in his shirt-sleeves nursing a baby. The man, who did not dream that an artist was looking at him, hung over the infant's face with a tender smile and now and then kissed its little cheek. Fildes at once thought of a father's love being intensified, as he imagined might be the case here, by the fact that the little one was motherless. He must find something to catch sympathy. Here it was, he thought: A widower; his loss quite fresh; grief for the lost one; compassion, love, sheltering care for the little human legacy. He had his subject. How successfully he treated it need not be said.

An account of a pleasant little outing with some members of the Royal Academy three years ago may be given as it stands:—

On July 25, 1901, I joined the Royal Academy Club in their annual "outing," the place fixed upon this year being a remarkable old house belonging to my namesake, Mr. Robinson, of gardening fame. My special host was Eyre Evans Crowe. The company consisted of about forty in all, including Sir L. Alma-Tadema, Alfred Parsons, Alfred East, Mr. Leslie, and others equally well known. Another guest was Sir Harry Johnston, of Uganda fame, a young-looking man, whom I got on with very well indeed. Mr. Robinson's seat is some few miles from East Grinstead, and several brakes met us at that

station and carried us on. The country is beautiful, and we saw it under the best circumstances. In London a terrific thunderstorm was raging, and the town, after having been dried up by a long drought, was suddenly flooded ; but here we had only a shower or two and three or four claps of thunder. My namesake's house dates from 1640, and the interior is to match. My companions were continually praising a chimney-piece, a door, a chair, a lock, a floor, and other belongings, and I tried to see with their eyes. The lunch reflected great credit upon our bachelor entertainer. The garden, or rather the gardens, were chiefly a display of wild-flowers ; delicate, simple English wayside or cottage blooms. Mr. Robinson told me he had a thousand acres, and that he had spent £100,000 on the property.

In the afternoon we started in brakes for a drive of some ten miles, stopping at old buildings and churches and almshouses and noting their merits. My interest was in the view, the constantly changing view. I did not know there was so much beauty so close at hand. Lovely valleys and hills and woods compelled admiration all the way, and the soft light, the shaded sunlight, the silence, the freedom from dust or traffic, gave a touching novelty in my case to the whole experience. We dined at an hotel at East Grinstead and fared exceedingly well. Sir L. Alma-Tadema was in the chair, and proposed a toast to the guests, mentioning me very kindly. He has rather a strong foreign accent. The latter part of the proceedings had to be hurried over, and there was no time for more speeches. We reached London at 11.30. It was a pleasant experience in a way, but I felt rather out of place. The talk was *so* professional and the general view so contracted, that a stranger stood outside. And then my own special friends among the R.A.'s—Hunter, Boughton, Sargent, Davis—were not there. For the most part I felt as much alone as Crusoe.

Besides the artists mentioned above, the writer was well acquainted with most of the prominent

draughtsmen on the illustrated press of his day, and especially with the *Punch* men. Tenniel he described as young-looking and handsome at seventy-two ; Linley Sambourne as having a boyish face, full of fun (this was in 1879) ; Du Maurier as an accomplished and pleasing man, who rejoiced frankly and openly at the success he made rather late in life in literature. Being placed in a post of honour at a dinner one evening, he whispered as he was making his way along the room to his seat : " You see where they have put me. It is all that dear, delightful little Trilby's doing." Leech, too, was a friend of Robinson's, who remembered the consternation the death of that genial artist caused at the *Punch* office. It was in 1864. A meeting of the *Punch* contributors was called in post haste. Shirley Brooks had not heard the sad news, and was smoking a cigar while coming down Bouverie Street, until met by Lemon, who told him what had occurred. Brooks was greatly shocked, and flung his cigar into the street as though it had been poison.

One of the greatest of caricaturists, Pellegrini, the " Ape " of *Vanity Fair*, was remarkable for the power he had of getting into his mind the characteristic features and expression of a man and of reproducing them at a subsequent period. He declared that all the assistance he had in drawing his cartoons was in a few lines on a card smaller than the palm of his hand, and that these lines he did not make at the time he was looking at his man. Most of his best sketches were obtained from glimpses in the lobby of the House of Commons. He would turn away, make a few

hurried strokes on his card, and think out the rest afterwards.

With musicians Robinson was never brought into association very much, although he was a lover of music and had seen and heard most of the great performers. Braham he could just remember, and he had distinct recollections of Mario, Grisi, Lablache, and many other celebrities. Mario, he thought, was probably the greatest tenor the world had ever had, although he by no means, in his latter days, suffered from the delusion common to so many people advanced in life, that the golden age of the world was just contemporary with their own youth. Mlle. Piccolomini, who was so much talked about at one time, was his pet aversion. In his opinion she could no more sing a scale than she could move the Monument. Whenever she came in contact with a difficulty, the manner of her shaking her little head, making a dash at it, and then scrambling helter-skelter through it, would have been amusing if it had not been so exasperating. One thing, however, has to be added, and that is that she never denied her incapacity. On one occasion she said : "They call me little impostor, and they give me bouquets and applauses and moneys ; why not be little impostor ?"

The great Meyerbeer, when he came over here at the time of the Exhibition of 1862, was much fêted and lionised. He was an odd-looking little man, with a decidedly Jewish cast of features. The aristocracy made much of him, his music being extremely fashionable at that time, and wherever he went he became the centre of a group of duchesses and other titled ladies. This caused



him no little embarrassment, as his command of our language was very imperfect. At a rehearsal in the Exhibition building, in answer to some remark addressed to him by Lord Lansdowne, he said: "I am proud of your praise; I am glad to be with you, and,"—here he stopped, at a loss for the words he wanted; at last, looking round and moving his hand, he added, "and *de occasion*."

A singer whom Robinson highly esteemed is Mr. Charles Santley. He is of a sensitive disposition, and long before he turned his back on the theatres he had conceived a thorough distaste for them. He disliked the very smell of the dressing-rooms, which he described as horribly uncomfortable. The language of the librettos of many operas he strongly reprehended, as, for instance, *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*, the latter especially. In 1880 it was suggested to him that he should reappear as Tom Tug in *The Waterman*, and Mr. John Hollingshead, hearing this, offered him his own terms if he would do so, but he refused to listen to it.

To Sims Reeves, Robinson gave credit for helping powerfully to improve the manners of the frequenters of musical performances. He had a very effective manner of showing his disapprobation if people chattered or interfered with the comfort of others by coming late and making a disturbance in getting to their seats. The great tenor would sit plump down in the midst of a solo in *The Messiah*. He was strong enough to make a protest of this kind, for practically he had no rival. If any poor wretch who had arrived late attempted to work his way in while the great man was singing alone, a hundred voices

would call out "Hush !" and the hands of a dozen attendants would be stretched out to motion him back. At the Royal Italian Opera of course this would never have done. But then all but the frequenters of the gallery at the opera go there to converse and to be seen, not because they care a rap about the music.

Everybody knows what a great popular success was achieved by "The Lost Chord" of Sir Arthur Sullivan, but few know its history. Sullivan said he was struck by the words in 1864, and tried his hand at music for them, but could not satisfy himself. Later on, while watching by the bedside of a dying brother in Dublin, he spent the time one night in another attempt, and the song as it stands was the result. A Dublin man named Robinson had previously set the same words to music. The music publisher did not care for Sullivan's composition, and reluctantly consented to have it put on the programme of a concert. This was done, and it became the rage. Sullivan offered to sell it outright for £50, but fortunately for him his offer was declined and he retained the copyright, out of which he got a very large sum from first to last. One curious thing he mentioned with regard to the song. There is an absurd blunder in it. The words are: "I struck *one* chord of music like the sound of a great Amen." Now Amen is a word of two syllables, so that there must have been two chords. He did not notice this, he said, until after the song had been sung in public, and he was terribly afraid he would get laughed at for it. Strange to say, nobody ever seemed to have found it out.

Sullivan was a little man, who always had an eyeglass screwed in one eye. He was a very pleasant companion. The income he derived from his profession was very large. For many years he was in receipt on an average of £11,000 a year from the Savoy Theatre alone, as his share of the profits of the operas produced at that house. After the first night of one of these productions, he said, he never again heard it through.

Private musicians would form a subject in themselves, and are outside the scope of this chapter. One incident, however, in connection with them may find a place here, as it related to an experience of Robinson's own. Next door to him at one time lived a numerous family, who strummed at the piano in turns from early morning until late at night. Representations being of no avail, and the situation becoming intolerable, he determined to sell his house. A gentleman was found willing to purchase it, and Robinson moved into a quieter abode. Some time afterwards he met the purchaser in the street. "How do you like the house?" he asked. "Oh, very much," was the reply. There was a pause. "By the way," said the gentleman, "were you annoyed by people playing the piano next door?" "I do remember something of the kind," was the reply. "Well," said the gentleman, "I complained, and they took no notice, so I arranged with a German band with large brass instruments to come and play in my drawing-room every night. My next-door neighbours soon had to capitulate."

## CHAPTER XXIV

Some military men—The Duke of Cambridge—Sir Evelyn Wood—Colonel Fletcher's anecdote of the Relief of Lucknow—Sir Edward Bradford and the tiger—A far-off dependency—Military discipline—A few doctors—Sir Andrew Clark—Sir B. W. Richardson—Sir W. Priestley—Doctors disagree—A delicate case—The connection between orange peel and surgery.

SOCIALLY at least, the most prominent military figure of Queen Victoria's reign was the Duke of Cambridge. Wherever there was an important "function," as the reporters call it, there the red, burly face of the Duke—not unlike that of the old Emperor William of Germany—might be confidently looked for. As a diner-out he was indefatigable, and he would probably have been very wide of the mark if he had attempted to say offhand how many times in his lifetime he had taken the British army under his sheltering wing, and in responding to the customary patriotic toast, assured a listening world that all was well at the Horse Guards and the War Office. There was an easy, frank, downright air about him and a carelessness about punctilio that made him popular even with those who did not think him an ideal selection for the head of one great branch of our national defences. Another fact that endeared him to the general was this, that

being married outside the provisions of the Royal Marriage Act, he was a true husband and a good father. He was a keen politician, and, politically speaking, Mr. Gladstone was his bugbear. Of course he could not, owing to his peculiar position as a cousin of the Sovereign and a servant of the State, take an active share in any controversial agitation, but he bubbled over, all unconsciously perhaps, with suppressed political excitement.

Reference has already been made to his little demonstration in the House of Commons when he cheered Mr. Disraeli for his denunciation of reform. During Mr. Gladstone's tenure of power the Duke, when not audibly denouncing some Government measure in a stage whisper to his nearest neighbour in the House of Lords, was very fond of sitting in the centre of the front gallery of the House of Commons, whence he could observe the Treasury bench and look down on the Premier with a face that did not bespeak unbounded trust. Who knows? Perhaps the Liberal leader in his view was a dangerous person who ought, if he had his deserts, to be dragged off and summarily tried by a drum-head court-martial. One of the severest blows the Duke ever had was the abolition of the absurd and pernicious system of purchase in the army, upon which he thought the efficiency of our military organisation depended. He never forgave Mr. Gladstone for that, and more than ever afterwards he seized opportunities of hinting disapproval of that statesman's policy. At the dinner to Lord Roberts at the Mansion House in 1893 for instance, when Home Rule was the absorbing topic of political discussion, he spoke of the

*United* Kingdom with such a marked stress on the first of those two words that the City Tories cheered vociferously. To his dying day he contended with manifest earnestness that he had never been opposed to innovation, and would plead that "not everything that is new is necessarily good," to which of course the obvious reply was that not everything that is new is necessarily bad.

The Duke was really a hard worker, and he loved his work. At breakfast he would read a batch of newspapers in which his secretary had put a mark against such items as he thought the Duke ought to see, and after breakfast he would begin his day of despatch-writing, interviews, and all sorts of engagements connected with his official life. Sometimes he would not go to bed until two o'clock in the morning. When the Lord Mayor, in 1874, fêted the officers who had taken part in the Ashanti campaign, Lord Wolseley declared that he had to "thank the Duke of Cambridge for numerous letters containing valuable military advice and cheerful encouragement received from him during the war." It would hardly be safe to infer from this that the Duke was competent to give that gallant officer lessons in strategy.

One military man of whose acquaintance Robinson was proud, is Sir Evelyn Wood, who possesses the distinction, probably unique, of having twice been recommended for the Victoria Cross, once in the Navy, the second time in the Army. He is a nephew of Lord Chancellor Hatherley and the son of Lady Wood, a clever novelist, and, as already mentioned, is an Essex man. The details of his military career in the

Crimea, in India, in Ashanti, in Zululand, and in connection with high commands at home, are too well known to need recapitulation here. We get a pleasant glimpse of him in the following description of the Colchester Oyster Feast in 1895 :—

Having received an invitation from the Mayor I went to Colchester, travelling by special train with the Earl of Warwick and Mr. Causton, M.P., with whom I had a good deal of pleasant talk. As many as 450 people were bidden to the feast, and they disposed of about 12,000 oysters. I was very cordially greeted by Sir Evelyn Wood, and it was soon clear that he was to be the hero of the day. Everybody rose when he was called upon, an honour paid to no one else. The band played, and the people cheered and then sang "For he is a jolly good fellow." Wood made an exceedingly able speech about the changed conditions of the British soldier. In about the middle of the speech he began to say that much was due to the daily press, and I instinctively felt that he was going to allude to me. There is much sympathy between this gallant man and myself. His mother always treated me with affectionate regard. It was I who had to break the news to her of his wound in Ashanti, and again in Zululand. I knew all her pride in him and the constant battle between that and her love. He has been a correspondent of the *Daily News*, and we have been each other's guest many a time. When therefore he turned to me in the presence of that great body of people, and told them how glad he was that I was present, that I was his "dear old friend," that we were both Essex men, and that my career had been an honourable one, I was more touched than I can say.

Two other valued military friends were General Sir William Butler and Colonel Charles W. Fletcher. The latter was a near neighbour in Kensington, and wrote for many years in the *Daily News* on military subjects. Colonel Fletcher

was one of that devoted band who defended the Lucknow Residency for over four months in the days of the Indian Mutiny. During that time he was shot in the left arm while on look-out duty. His fine handsome countenance, exceptional height, and commanding air made him conspicuous in any company he might be in. Reserved almost to a fault, it was very difficult to get him to speak of his varied experiences, but when in the company of intimate friends he would occasionally allow himself to be drawn out, and would leave vivid pictures on the minds of his listeners. Being asked what struck him most on the great day of deliverance when Lord Clyde's troops marched in to the relief of the heroic little garrison, after the months of wearing anxiety, intensified by the presence of women and children in their midst, he said that one of the men, seeing a little child, broke from the ranks and, seizing the little one in his arms, embraced it without uttering a word. Nothing could have been more pathetic than the gallant Colonel's description of this little incident.

Londoners have not forgotten Sir Edward Bradford, the one-armed Chief Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, who, in face of great difficulties, achieved considerable success in that post. He is a short man of agreeable manners and kindly disposition. On the occasion of the dinner to Lord Roberts at the Mansion House in 1893, he said he had fallen from his horse three or four times on his way to the City, owing to the slipperiness of the streets. He would not allow that his hold on the reins was at fault. In fact he seemed very little incommoded by the absence of one arm, and cut his food with his knife in a most



ingenious and dexterous way. He lost his arm shooting tigers in India. A tiger coming unexpectedly upon him, he had to bolt for a tree and climb up it. Here he thought he was safe, but the brute stood on its hind legs, pulled him bodily from a branch, and, getting him on the ground, began munching his arm. Two officers who were there, afraid of killing their friend, ran close up to the tiger and shot him.

Sir Edward said on one occasion that he distinctly remembered his sensations while his arm was being gnawed at. The first bite was a great shock, but the arm soon became numbed, and, while the creature was munching, the feeling uppermost in his mind was one of curiosity as to which part of his body would be attacked next. He has actually shot five tigers, so his friends declare, after that terrible experience.

The following account of another well-known officer affords a curious glimpse of the sort of life that is led by some Englishmen who represent their country in wild, out-of-the-way dependencies :—

I met an interesting man the other night (October 1890), Sir M. Clarke, Governor of Basutoland, together with a no less interesting person, viz. his wife. He has ruled that African province for five years without any army, without any defence at all save some native police. The people obey him implicitly, and he has power over their lives. He had a man hanged recently for cruelty. I asked him repeatedly what he would do if the natives refused to obey him, but he would not consider such a thing even as a possibility. He said the natives had been greatly improved in material condition by some Protestant missionaries from France who had been settled among them for fifty years. There are about twenty chiefs who rule

under him. The post is evidently one requiring the utmost tact. They hope soon to have a railway open up to within eighty miles of the chief place. The lady is very pretty, and her talk was pleasant and clever. I asked her who made her hats. She said she got everything from Paris. Boxes came at intervals. But there were no Europeans, save a few missionaries, to see them. She rides a great deal. There are no roads in our sense of the word, but tracks are made in the bush. They get Cape papers and our chief monthly reviews.

One of the difficulties of a commanding officer arises from the mutual jealousies of army chaplains of different creeds. An eminent commander once told how a priest attached to a certain regiment refused to bury a soldier who had been a Catholic, but who persisted to the last in saying he wanted his wife to have charge of his three children in all things, although she was a Protestant. "Then," said the commanding officer to the priest, "I order you under arrest." The priest got frightened, as also for that matter did the officer, for it was a strong measure. However, in the end all was well, for the man's widow begged that the Protestant clergyman might officiate, and this was done. The incident is related merely because it gives an insight into the military mind. "What, a squabble about religion? I will have none of that. Put the man under arrest." A short and easy way truly to get rid of all such controversies!

Here is another story illustrative of military notions of discipline that was told on good authority. A non-commissioned officer for some offence was reduced to the ranks, and, being jeered at by a drummer-boy, in a fit of rage killed the

lad on the spot. The officers engaged counsel to defend the man, and a lawyer was sent to confer with him in his cell. To the lawyer's surprise the prisoner refused to plead "Not guilty," and on being remonstrated with, observed that the discipline of the army "would not be worth a d—" if he was not hanged. And hanged he was.

Closely akin to this sentiment of discipline that makes so powerfully for military efficiency is the feeling of admiration, of affection even, of the rank and file for competent officers who discharge their duties with a due regard for the welfare of those under them. Miss Martineau told an amusing anecdote on this subject which she heard from her friend the revered Miss Florence Nightingale. Miss Nightingale was going through a hospital at Scutari one morning when she observed a poor fellow, who had been badly wounded, trying to catch her eye. "How are you this morning?" she asked. "Thank you, Miss, I am better. General — was here after you left yesterday, and he spoke to me, Miss, he did." "I am glad of that," said Miss Nightingale; "what did he say?" "He stopped opposite my bed," said the poor invalid, his gaze brightening as he spoke, "and he said: 'Why, Jack Hilton, is that you? Why, d— my eyes, I thought you were dead long ago.' So kind of him, wasn't it, Miss?" added the soldier, almost sobbing with joy at the recollection.

In their professional capacity, Robinson was fortunate enough to see very little of medical men, but some few were numbered among his friends. Soon after coming to London he became acquainted with Dr. John Chapman, the well-known publisher who turned physician. He was a respectable

writer with good literary taste, a Rationalist of the extreme German type, and from his office issued the *Westminster Review*, to which Mr. John Stuart Mill, Mr. Francis Newman, Miss Frances Power Cobbe, and other writers of a theistic turn of mind used to contribute. Dr. Chapman was an eccentric man, given to taking up strange ideas. Towards the end of his life he went to live in Paris, and, probably from the fact that he had to cross the Channel whenever he visited his native country, he turned his attention to the subject of the prevention of sea-sickness. The result was the publication of a book in which he sought to establish the fact that no one need suffer from that distressing ailment if he would only apply ice-bags to his spine while at sea. It does not appear that anybody besides the worthy doctor ever tried this cure, which some may think as much to be dreaded as the disease.

Sir Andrew Clark was long an intimate friend. One of his peculiarities was this, that he had a certain set of general observations, a regular formula, which he invariably used with his patients, as many of them discovered on comparing notes. "You may depend upon it," he would say, "Nature is inexorable. You cannot evade her. Sooner or later she will repay." He was one of the most kind-hearted of men and never had a bad word for anybody, unless it was a brother medical man who had been guilty of unprofessional conduct. Under these circumstances he was, like Nature, inexorable. Discussing once a certain practitioner who published a book descriptive of the case of one of his most distinguished patients, Sir Andrew looked grave, and he looked graver still when he

told how the same practitioner had offered to doctor Mr. Gladstone for nothing! That was indeed the great, the unpardonable sin. Let it not be supposed, however, that Sir Andrew was a money-grubber. Many a patient who he thought could not well afford to pay had the benefit of his great knowledge and experience without spending a single farthing.

Another well-known member of the medical profession, Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, had strange ideas on some subjects. On one occasion he declared that he had been making some wonderful experiments in the way of bringing to life fishes that had been dead for three days. On being asked whether something of the kind might be done in the case of human beings, he grew mysterious. Who could tell, he said, where the discoveries of science would end? Sir William Priestley heard this and listened in silence. These two doctors, by the way, being asked what was the plague that caused such havoc in olden days, Richardson at once said "typhus," but Priestley suggested that typhus did not present certain symptoms that invariably accompanied the plague. It was the old story with regard to the disagreements of the learned.

Medical men, it is well known, hear strange confessions. An eminent practitioner has a beautiful vase which a friend was admiring. "Oh, that," said the owner, "was a present from a young lady." She came to him, it appeared, in some excitement one day and said she had a secret. She was about to be married, and married to the only man she had ever loved, but unfortunately when a foolish girl she had flirted with a young cousin,

and she had tattooed his name, "Johnny," on the calf of her leg. Could it be taken out? The doctor asked whether, by any chance, the bridegroom's name was Tommy, or some name like Johnny, so that an alteration might be made, but it was something quite different. Ultimately the tattoo marks were re-tattooed with milk, but the doctor thought there would always be an ugly scar.

The fact that some classes, among whom medical men have a prominent place, earn a living out of the misfortunes of other people, is one of the many curious features of our highly complex civilisation. This was emphasised with much humour once by an eminent surgeon. The famous Robert Lee was walking to the hospital with another well-known member of his profession, Dr. Cæsar Hawkins, who was Serjeant Surgeon to Queen Victoria, and as he walked he saw on the pavement a piece of orange peel, which he kicked into the road. Hawkins thereupon stepped into the roadway and, picking up the orange peel, replaced it on the pavement, observing in a tone of reproach: "What *are* you thinking about?" Lee delighted to relate this story.

## CHAPTER XXV

Actors and the stage—Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt—The Comédie Française in London—M. Coquelin on Sir Henry Irving—Macready—Helen Faucit—Keeley—Actors off the stage—Stage morality—Stage history—Sir Henry Irving—Miss Ellen Terry—Some first-night incidents.

LIKE his friend George Henry Lewes, Robinson had seen Rachel and Sarah Bernhardt, Macready and Irving, Helen Faucit and Ellen Terry. It was not until the last twenty years or so of his life, however, that he became a regular playgoer, and jottings about the plays and players he saw previous to that period are comparatively few. For Rachel he had a sincere admiration. Her fine classicism, the wonderful truth and depth and energy of her utterance in the old formal French tragic drama, made a profound impression on him as on others. But he preferred Sarah Bernhardt. Rachel was limited. She was graceful, no doubt, as a Greek statue; she could thrill by the apparent sincerity of her representation of tumultuous passions, such as rage, remorse, despair. But it was possible to get weary at last of listening to her long tirades and invocations, however admirable the art with which they were delivered. Too much Racine and Corneille is what even Frenchmen cannot stand in these days, whatever may

have been the case in the reign of the Grand Monarque.

Mme. Bernhardt can do something more than spout Racine and Corneille. Nothing could be more impressive than her Phèdre. It reveals the innermost soul of the poor, conscience-stricken woman, yet many prefer her Frou-Frou in MM. Meilhac and Halévy's fine play of the same name. How well she depicts in the earlier scenes the light, careless indifference of the woman whose sole thought is of the pleasures of life, a true daughter of the father who dyes "because he does not think himself worthy to wear his grey hairs!" And then what a contrast in the later scenes, when she upbraids her sister for supplanting her in her husband's affections, and when later on she flings her arms around her husband and tries by physical force to prevent him from going to fight the duel with her lover! There is no frigid classicism here. She is a real woman, and, in spite of the faults of the character in the earlier scenes, she wins all sympathies.

The success of Mme. Bernhardt in London, on the occasion of the visit of the Comédie Française Company in 1879, was one of the most remarkable ever achieved by any performer. Little was known of her here at the time, yet she immediately riveted attention. It is related of Edmund Kean that before he spoke in Shylock his attitude, as he leaned against a pillar, was the object of admiration. In the same way when the members of the French company stood ranged in a group upon the stage of the Gaiety Theatre on the opening night of the season, while M. Got delivered his rhymed address from Molière to "Shekspeare," all



eyes were drawn to the gracefully reclining figure of the young *sociétaire*. Report had represented her as extremely thin, and many were the jokes of the Paris wits on this subject. One declared that an empty carriage had been seen to drive up to the Théâtre Français, and that out of it had stepped the popular actress. Another told how a parapet of a house had fallen upon her, and how, when the horrified spectators of the accident went to pick up her remains, they found that she was uninjured, her body having found room to lie between the stone and the pavement. In reality Mme. Bernhardt, although slimmer than she is now, was of average figure. Her naked arms in *Phèdre* by no means made a bad show.

All London flocked to the Gaiety, even people who did not know a word of French paying high prices for seats in order to be able to say they had seen the new wonder. It was indeed her triumph, although her associates could not see it. Through their manager, M. Perrin, they had made a hard bargain beforehand, stipulating for a sum of money for each performance payable in advance, a sum that was largely in excess of what the receipts would be at the ordinary prices supposing not a single seat ever remained empty. Yet the very men who had refused to take any risk, and had obtained their own terms, began to grumble at the comparatively small "share of the cake" they were receiving. Then fate played these gentlemen a scurvy trick. Mme. Bernhardt was announced to appear one afternoon in *L'Etrangère*. She was taken ill, and the *semainier* or stage-manager for the week had to announce that *Tartufe*, with an excellent cast

including Got and Delaunay, would be given instead. Instantly there was a rush to the exits, and *Tartufe* was given practically to empty benches.

The fact is that even M. Coquelin the elder, great actor as he is, has not been a success in London. He has never been the fashion. Yet how admirable is his art! That *bourgeois*-looking man, with a face almost like the comic mask of the ancient Romans, will come on in evening dress and narrate the adventure of an old sea captain who, when on a raft after being shipwrecked, has to kill his favourite dog, who has gone mad—the dog who once saved his life—and forthwith you see the whole scene, and you imagine the old salt is before you in person. And then there are his valets in Molière. Shall we ever have such another Mascarille? His memory is wonderful. When on tour he will play long, arduous parts in different plays night after night, and he is always letter perfect.

Being asked one day whether he ever forgot a part after learning it, he said that he could step on the stage at any moment and play Figaro or Mascarille, or any of the repertory parts that he learned when he was younger. "I have only to open my mouth," he said, "and the speeches come out" (suited the action to the words) "like a ribbon that is being unwound from a reel. But I am of opinion that after forty a man's memory hardens. At all events if I have to play a part that I learned in later life, I require just one rehearsal in order to be sure of myself."

M. Coquelin knows very little English, and, moreover, has few opportunities of going to see our

actors and actresses when over here. He did go once to the Lyceum to see *The Bells*. The stage management he admired greatly. A fine harmony of tone was preserved throughout, and prepared the audience for the final catastrophe. Sir Henry Irving, however, he liked only with qualifications. "He has great qualities as regards picturesque bearing and so forth," he said; "but he is too restless, too spasmodic. And it must be borne in mind that the conscience-stricken man he represents has murdered the Polish Jew many years previously. Now no man can be constantly in the throes of remorseful anguish for years as Irving represents him to be. He could not live through it."

Coquelin, by the bye, denies that French actors gesticulate more than English actors, as is generally supposed. At the Conservatoire the professors repress gesticulation, he said, and will frequently, with this object, tie the arms of a novice behind him, so that he shall not trust to them for effect.

Of Macready, Robinson could only say *vidi tantum*. He went with Mr. G. H. Lewes to the Macready farewell benefit in 1851, and was not much impressed by what he saw. The tragedian was getting on in years, and probably the public taste had altered. Could it be possible, he thought, that this robustious, roaring actor, with his violent and abrupt contrasts of tone and manner, was the man who had been extolled as the greatest English exponent of the dramatic art? But he was a young man, and he did no more than hint such views to his elders.

It was otherwise as regards his opinion of Miss Helen Faucit, whose refinement and gentleness and power of simple, pathetic expression captivated

all her contemporaries without exception. Her attempt to represent Lady Macbeth as a rather nice lady for a small drawing-room gathering was a mistake, but she made few such mistakes. In fact the power she had of identifying herself with a character, of feeling intuitively how that character would act under given conditions, was remarkable. Her husband, Sir Theodore Martin, who always spoke of her with the utmost pride and admiration, told how she once took the part of a blind girl in a half-amateur performance with such wondrous skill that the next day Irving and Critchett (the oculist) called, and the latter begged her to tell him where she had learned that wonderful art of feigning blindness. It must have been in a hospital, or from long association with a blind person somewhere. "No," she replied; "it is simply sympathy." But she suffered for it for days afterwards. She kept her eyes open all the time she performed, but saw nothing.

Mention has already been made in an earlier chapter of Robert Keeley. He and his wife were the most popular couple on the stage. Keeley had only to appear before an audience, and his great round beaming face provoked a shout of laughter. He was that strange mixture, a low comedian and a scholar. German philosophy was his particular study, and he was well versed in Kant and Hegel, Schlegel and Fichte. In such strange contrasts does life abound.

"The players and I are happily no friends," said Pope, but that was only because he wanted to annoy Cibber. At all events few will agree with the satirist. As a matter of fact the players, as a rule, are excellent company. And the strange part

of it is that meeting them in private does not seem to have the least tendency to destroy the illusion of their performances. Suppose we know Sir Henry Irving. We have, let us say, just been chatting with him. An hour or two afterwards we see him on the stage as Corporal Brewster, or Archbishop Becket, or Matthias. Are we the less impressed on that account? Not at all. The man is the same and we know it, but we surrender ourselves without question to the deception that is being practised upon us.

Surely no one knows the actors better than the actors themselves. Yet it is notorious that actors are what are called "good audience." At a morning performance where the profession are usually in force, for they cannot as a rule of course go to the play at night, one will, if the piece is a pathetic one, see actresses in the stalls, and actors too for that matter, weeping copious tears over imaginary distresses. Two veteran critics even have been known to confess to having cried over the woes of Black-Eyed Susan, but this, although not impossible, is difficult of belief. As a rule the critics do not see enough of well-worn plays to enter so heartily as all this into their spirit. The story goes that not one of them has ever seen the last act of the *School for Scandal*, because they invariably rush off after the Screen scene. This of course is a libel upon them. But they have not that craving for the drama that the actors themselves have. It is this simplicity of character that makes actors such pleasant company. They are unworldly creatures and yet they enjoy life. There is no pettiness or meanness about them—speaking of them as a body. Here is an impression, taken on the spot, of one of their gatherings:—

On Sunday, June 19, 1881, I dined at the Green Room Club as the guest of Mr. Bronson Howard, the clever and amiable American dramatist, who has written three successful plays in succession, *Brighton*, *Truth*, and *The Old Love and the New*. The speaking was very good, and the general tone of the proceedings higher than that which usually prevails at club meetings. Every theatrical company in London was represented, and all the talk was of the stage. The Duke of Beaufort delights in the society of actors, and even travels with them sometimes as far as America. He showed good taste as chairman, and though no orator, always said what was sensible. Mr. Toole was most humorous, and kept his hearers in a constant state of laughter. Mr. Wilson Barrett, who has a fine intellectual face and is one of the pleasantest of men, spoke well of the difficulties of management. MacCullough and Florence, the Americans, both spoke, and each declared that he had been received with open arms by the profession.

The most enthusiastic reception was given to the two chief members of the Saxe-Meiningen Company, one of whom returned thanks in broken English. MacCullough has a fine presence; he is the very type of a Western giant. The German (Herr Barnay) was also a very powerful man. The usual theory of actors and their lives does not hold good. They were free from the slightest trace of coarseness, and in no case was there excess. Generous almost to a fault, they appeared to be glad that German, French, Italian, Dutch, and American actors should find it worth while to visit England, and no critics could be more genial or sympathetic. It was odd to see in their private garb actors like David James, Thomas Thorne, Charles Warner, W. J. Hill, John Billington, Frank Archer, and a host of others usually associated in the mind with scenes of a different kind.

Times have changed, it will be seen, since the days when a foreign company were hooted at Drury Lane by English performers, who accused them of

coming to take the bread out of their mouths. And the performances, it may be asked, have they improved? The answer is that they have, but that they still leave something to be desired. The drama's laws the drama's patrons give, as Dr. Johnson well observed. We have progressed since the days of the Coal Holes and Cider Cellars and low comedians like Wright, but the moral tone of farcical comedies is still low, and so is that of many performances at the music-halls. The spread of education, and the consequent improvement in the public taste, may be trusted to cure this. With the serious drama the case is otherwise. Its chief offence, when open to criticism at all, is the perversion of history it often sets before an audience. Take for instance Mr. Wills's *Charles I.*, in which Sir Henry Irving causes such copious tears to be shed. What a travesty of history to present before young people, or, for that matter, before their elders, a goodly proportion of whom are not able to distinguish truth from falsehood in such matters!

In a preface to the published play the author says: "The aim and the mission of the historical dramatist are not the same as those of the historian, but his main purpose is the exhibition of historical characters strongly and sharply defined, and to effect this purpose, minor circumstances may be modified. When history is to be represented on the stage, it is of more importance that the incidents should be typical than that they should accurately copy facts." Mr. Wills, in fact, must have been surprised at his own moderation in not making Cromwell murder his own mother, contenting himself merely with representing him as offering

his support to Charles in consideration of an earldom. It is ever so, however. One never sees a Puritan upon the stage but one sees a sneaking, lying, snuffling, shuffling knave. The Puritans closed the theatres, and robbed the poor players of their living in the troublous times of the Commonwealth. Since then the players have had an ample revenge.

Many names might be mentioned as having been associated with the marked improvement in the art of the stage which has been observable during the last fifty, and more particularly during the last thirty-five years. There are Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, whose productions, although sneered at as "tea-cup and saucer" comedies, were a great advance on those that preceded them, both as literary efforts and from the point of view of scenic presentment. Other pioneers will readily occur to all who have followed the progress of dramatic art in this country. But there is one name which stands pre-eminent, and it is that of Sir Henry Irving. In private life, as on the stage, he has worthily upheld the prestige of his craft. His striking appearance would single him out for notice in any company, and his winning smile makes friends at first sight. He is not ashamed to tell of his early struggles; how he has played parts like that of Claude Melnotte in *The Lady of Lyons* at a salary of thirty shillings a week. A dinner at the Star and Garter in July 1894 brought together Irving and a host of friends. Here is some account of it:—

Second to no one in my admiration of Ellen Terry, I knew little of her appearance off the stage until last Sunday evening, when I took her in to dinner at the Star



and Garter at Richmond, on the occasion of a dinner given by Henry Irving. She proved a fascinating personage. It was a beautiful summer evening, and I had greatly enjoyed a drive in a victoria through Richmond Park. The guests and ordinary visitors were striding round the gardens of the hotel. Here a dramatist ; there a poet ; sometimes a journalist ; an occasional American. I know so many. I have lived so long. I chatted in the grounds with Pigott and W. H. Russell, and Aïdé, and the young Irvings, and Henry Irving himself.

Laurence Irving, the younger son, told me when I blamed him for not having stuck to diplomacy and Russia, that he had satisfied himself that the son of an actor would not find a place in the upper circles of the profession. Foreign Courts would not receive, for instance, a minister who was the son of a well-known actor—one, perhaps, on the stage at the time. Was he right ? I almost think he was.

"I will ask you to look after Ellen Terry," said Irving to me just before we went to dinner. The great actress was in high spirits, but she declared she was tired. She had been playing Portia the previous evening, and could not quite shake off the character. The next day she was to start on a sixty-miles drive to her cottage at Winchelsea. There she would potter about in her pony chaise for six weeks, and forget the stage and its worries. We talked a good deal of America. First she said it was a country of miracles : it was stupendous ; it was inconceivably hospitable ; it was prodigiously clever. Then, when I ventured a little hint about American peculiarities, she gradually became exceedingly funny. Her imitations of the various accents, fading at last into a mere inflection of the voice, were delightful. I enjoyed them to the utmost.

She said they gave her, at a part of her journey, a four-post bedstead in the train ; literally a bed with four posts. She talked with enthusiasm of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Of matters at home, delicate allusions were made to the admiration she had inspired in Black. She said she knew she was the original of Miss White in *Macleod of Dare*.

She had seen Barrie's *Professor's Love Story* in MS., and had admired the first act, but she thought the rest was childish, and persuaded Irving not to have it. "I have so much respect for him," she said, "that I could not endure the thought of seeing him mooning about the stage, as he would have to do, saying 'Peep-bo! peep-bo!'"

One of the best impersonators of old men on the stage is Mr. C. W. Somerset. His performance of the crusty old Earl who is won over by the artless prattle of the boy in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* was a really fine bit of character acting, worthy to rank with Irving's Corporal Brewster. Twelve years ago or so, Mr. Somerset was the recipient of an implied compliment that was extremely flattering. He was playing the part of the Earl, and the Prince of Wales (King Edward VII.), who was present, asked to see him in his box. The actor went, and the Prince shook hands with him and praised his acting. Presently Mr. Somerset, who was still made up as an old gentleman, had to go back to the stage, as the curtain was about to ring up, and he turned to leave. Hereupon a gentleman who was in attendance on the Prince took hold of his arm, saying: "Let me lead you." He was evidently under the impression that the actor, who without his disguise would not have looked a day over thirty, was a feeble old man.

A collection of funny incidents that have happened on first nights would make amusing reading. Just a few may be given here. Mr. Wills's *Brag*, at the Haymarket Theatre, greatly wearied the audience, who, as usually happens when once it is seen to be hopeless to expect entertainment from a play, began to make fun of it.

Towards the middle of the last act poor Terriss (the same who was afterwards stabbed to death by a madman outside the stage entrance of the Adelphi Theatre) had to say : "I cannot make head or tail of all this drivel." "No more can I," said a gentleman in the pit, as he put on his coat previous to making his exit. That gave the piece the *coup de grâce*. But a cleverer thing was said by a boy in the gallery on the occasion of the first performance of *My Awful Dad* at the Gaiety. Mr. Charles Mathews, it will be remembered, used to play gay, rollicking young fellows long after he had got beyond middle age. On the night in question there was a delay in beginning, owing to the non-arrival, so it was said, of some distinguished guests in the boxes. At length a juvenile voice up above was heard to say : "Now, then, up with the rag, or Charley will be too old to play."

Actors, it is well known, are as a rule superstitious folk. Rachel was convinced that unless she opened a season with *Phèdre* she would be unsuccessful. Perhaps the most widespread superstition on the stage has reference to cats, the appearance of one of which on a first night is supposed to be very unlucky. No doubt in a sense this is really the case at times. On the first night of a new play at the Court Theatre thirty or more years ago (was it not *Randall's Thumb*?) there was a scene representing the sea, and a black cat was seen walking calmly across the foaming billows. Such little incidents naturally do not make for the success of serious drama.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Dinners and diners—Public banquets and their miseries—A fiasco at the Guildhall—Companions of the table—Awkward mistakes—A strange custom—After-dinner orators—G. A. Sala's little hoax—A successful speech—Queer incidents.

FEW men will confess to a liking for public dinners, and few men who can afford them resist the temptation to take part in such gatherings. It is one of the mysteries of human life in a civilised state. To begin with, the number of people, the commotion, the hubbub, the scurrying about of waiters, the thousand-and-one disturbing elements in the scene, are destructive of true sociability. Then as to the dinner itself, how often is it a cause of vexation and ill-temper instead of that generous, benevolent disposition that comes of an appetite well appeased? Caterers are overtaxed. It is impossible, or almost impossible, to supply hot meats to three hundred people at once in the same way as if they were ten or a dozen. Some improvement there has been of late years. That it was needed is suggested by the following description of the farewell dinner to Charles Dickens in 1867:—

Every one will allow, I suppose, that the next worse thing to being dinnerless is to have had a bad dinner; to have paid a guinea for a seat at a well-stored table, and to return home after some hours of hopeless endeavour

with an appetite whose edge would cut half through a round of boiled granite, or to have left the appetite behind, not in the natural operation of dining, but in the anxious process of tasting multitudinous dishes in the vain hope of finding something upon the table that you could relish. At the Dickens dinner I was not more unfortunate than my neighbours, yet my meal consisted of soup half cold ; a piece of turbot ditto ; a bone from a boiled chicken not milk-warm, with some wretched confectionery, all butter and lard. Observe that everything gets nearly cold. In one of his novels Disraeli taunts the French with this defect in their cookery, and urges them to get our ware, which is easily kept warmed, but Disraeli had not had much public dinner experience. Often have I made my dinner on the little rasped rolls of bread which, by dint of exertion, you can get in good quantity. After the removal of the covers everybody seems engaged, but for the most part it is a labour-in-vain work. If you get soup, it is not the soup you wanted ; if you have the turbot, you certainly haven't the sauce ; and to expect a piece of ham with your chicken would be unreasonable. The difficulty makes men selfish, and, as Laman Blanchard parodied the lines, the principle observable at the tables is—

That they shall take who have the power,  
And they shall dine who can.

Your pathetic appeals are disregarded. You send up your plate for a slice of tongue, and you never see that plate again ; and at last the solid dishes have all melted away into a horrible mockery of custards and jellies. Even a wrong cut of the spoiled mutton is now irrecoverable. As to the wine, it is best to be altogether silent. In your sufferings you may have recourse to it, for there is often an insidious pleasantness about it, but you will toss about half the night in consequence, and rise with a headache which no soda will allay.

All old diners-out at Willis's Rooms (that particular dinner was at another place, but Willis's

was formerly pre-eminent for its badness) will agree that the description is little, if at all, overdrawn. At Willis's, twenty years ago, it was no uncommon thing for waiters to fight for the dishes as they came from the kitchen, and the guest was lucky if he did not have soup or sloppy water with green peas in it dropped down the back of his coat, or, worse still, on his shirt-front. Sometimes a waiter, having brought the soup, would disappear for an hour, and at the end of that time, possibly in a fit of remorse, bring half-a-dozen dishes all at once, just as the sweets were being served at some other tables. Beware the anger of a patient man, says a Spanish proverb. There has been seen, even in the eyes of men not naturally of a vengeful disposition, a look that should have annihilated those who had kept them dinnerless. Sir Henry M. Stanley would not have minded. He was much banqueted, but he made it a strict rule never to eat anything at a public dinner table. Perhaps he lived all the longer on this account.

Things are not always very well regulated, even in so august a place as the Guildhall of the City of London, as the following extract from our diaries will show :—

On the 9th of November 1880 I accepted an invitation to dine at the Guildhall, but though I sat down to table and heard the grace, I partook of no dinner. Somebody who was responsible for the arrangements had lost his head, and many people, of whom I was one, could find no seat corresponding with their tickets. Having been twice requested to give place to others, I at last resolved, without any fuss, to leave the place altogether. This I did, and having driven to the Reform Club, I solaced myself with narrating my experiences to Mr. Bernal Osborne and Mr. Labouchere. The last

thing I saw on leaving the hall was the editor of the *Times*, with a ticket in his hand, wandering helplessly about, pushed here and there by the waiters.

As regards the company at a public dinner, that is to say, one's neighbours to right and left, one may or may not be more fortunate than with the dinner itself. But many and grievous are the disappointments. The waiter (those waiters again!) may misplace the cards and old friends become separated. You have been expecting to sit next to Smith, the noted wit, or Brown, with whom you have sympathies and recollections in common, and you find you are side by side with Jones, the famous surgeon, who entertains you with the latest from the hospitals, and an account of some new antiseptic.

This has really been known to happen, although it is an extreme case. It is more likely that you will sit next to some one who seems to know nothing of any subject in which you are interested. A member of Parliament once observed to Robinson at a public dinner: "There has been a great deal in the papers lately about that American writer named Rudyard Kipling." The M.P. was told that Kipling was an Englishman, but he would not agree to this. "No, I think not," he said, adding: "But really, these Americans do get talked about." Robinson ventured to remark that there was perhaps some reason for the talk in Kipling's case. "Oh yes," said the M.P., as though making a polite concession, "I have always understood that he is a very *instructive* writer." This reminds one of George the First's criticism, that Mr. Pope (he called him "Misdar Bobe") was "very honest man."

Mistakes are frequent. A card is in the wrong place. You artfully turn the conversation towards some subject in which you suppose your neighbour to be specially well informed, and you find by his vacant look and random replies that he is not the man you have taken him for. Thus at the Lord Mayor's dinner to the representatives of literature in 1881, a distinguished *littérateur* imagined he was sitting next to Mr. John Hollingshead, and accordingly began to talk about Sarah Bernhardt and the French drama generally. At first he thought the manager had something to conceal, as he persistently attempted to dodge the subject, but at length he was undeceived. "Really, sir, I think you are mistaking me for some one else," said his neighbour; "I know as little of the drama as any one living, for I have been absent, travelling in Persia and the East, for the last five years." And so it was.

A similar incident happened at the Benchers' dinner in the Middle Temple in 1896. Lord Kimberley, sitting next to a very worthy Q.C. who was very deaf, took him for Robinson, whose name was down for the seat the Q.C. occupied, and began to tell of his early Radicalism and how in public discussion he had defended the taking of King Charles's head off. "I think," said the Q.C. after a slight pause, "that you were saying something about Justice Charles." Such little mystifications, although soon cleared up, are not a good beginning to an evening's intimacy.

But the most trying part of the evening comes when, in the customary phrase, the cloth is removed. (As a matter of fact no one attempts to do any such thing.) In ninety-nine cases out of



a hundred only men are at table, row after row of black coats forming a sombre picture. If brighter dresses are to be seen they are in a gallery, where a few ladies are privileged maybe to see their lords and masters eat a succession of viands while they have to be content with a sandwich and a glass of sherry. Well, the men having devoured the dinner, it is by no means an uncommon thing to drag in a woman to return thanks to Almighty God "for these and all Thy mercies given." Is there anything that we know of the manners and customs of tribal savages more grotesque, more unjust? Custom, however, blinds people to its absurdity to all appearance, since it is invariably taken as a matter of course.

The singer retires amid a rattling of plates and glasses by way of applause, and then the voice of the toast-master, a sort of glorified head waiter who spends a wasted existence calling out "Charge your glasses, gentlemen : bumpers," or "Silence for your chairman, gentlemen," proclaims that the business of speech-making has begun. Then you have, as a rule, the stalest of stale platitudes about the Royal Family, and the services, and the toast of the evening, whatever it may be, and the visitors and all the rest of it. You have even the same old sayings and the same old excuses. "Mr. Chairman," says one, "it has been remarked that brevity is the soul of wit," and so forth. It is too true. It has been remarked and remarked a great deal too often. Moreover, it might be urged that wit is not necessarily the soul of brevity.

But is the speaker brief? Not as a rule. It is not unlikely that after thus promising to be merciful, he will occupy a quarter of an hour in

telling his hearers how unworthy he is to be entrusted with the proposal of so important a toast, and how he wishes some one else had been chosen in his stead. This is really the burden of about one-half of half the speeches one hears at public gatherings of the sort. Why are such men asked to speak? Why did the Lord Mayor in 1869 call upon Martin Tupper to respond for literature at a Mansion House banquet? These are mysteries.

One must not be too hard on the speakers. Like the pianist in America, whom his audience were kindly requested not to shoot, they do their best. The fact seems to be that after-dinner oratory is a difficult accomplishment, and that few, very few, excel in it. Let us be grateful then to those who can amuse, not bore us, when we must attend a public dinner. Such men there are. Among politicians Lord Granville was, and Lord Rosebery perhaps is, pre-eminent; among soldiers Lord Roberts excels; among authors Dickens and James Russell Lowell were hard to beat; among actors Sir Charles Wyndham is perhaps the best, Sir Henry Irving being good, but rather too solid; and among the journalists of recent years the most prominent men in this respect have been Edmund Yates, George Augustus Sala, and J. R. Robinson. Yates spoke as he wrote. He was always lively, chatty, and entertaining, and invariably there was an idea running through his speeches.

Sala spoke better than he wrote. In some respects he was an ideal after-dinner speaker. His mother, as is well known, was an actress, and he was a born actor. Drawing himself up to his full height and thrusting his head well back, he would fix his hearers with that wonderful eye of his that

seemed to be starting from its socket, and would speak in a loud, clear, admirably modulated voice that enabled him to get the greatest possible effect out of all his points. With him, too, there was always a connecting idea that linked his discourse together. Being a first-rate French scholar, he was asked to speak some ten years ago at a dinner of foreign journalists in London, where French was the language chiefly spoken. "I am going to have some fun with them, you see," he said to a friend as he went into the dining-room. And sure enough he did.

When called upon, he began a speech in a most surprising kind of Stratford-atte-Bowe lingo, the worst perhaps that has ever been heard. "Mossoo le Presidong," he said, "nous avong monjay ung tray bong dinay. Noo somm tray obleejay pour voter bontay," and so forth, through a lot of most absurd compliments to his worthy hosts. The foreigners, being very polite men, looked perfectly serious, although they wondered no doubt why a man who spoke such execrable French did not stick to his own language. All of a sudden, however, Sala began to warm up to his subject. He talked of international good-feeling, of the miseries caused by jealousies between neighbouring countries, and as he went on, his accent, his language, became transformed, and he addressed his hearers in the purest Parisian. The change was so sudden that for a second—not more—they looked puzzled, and then they burst into such a shout of laughter that the orator's eloquence for the moment was sadly spoiled.

Another occasion on which Sala came out strong was the dinner to Mr. Barnum at the Hotel

Victoria, when that worthy was last in London. Barnum, the prince of humbugs (as he himself admitted), was a wonderful study, and he attracted Sala, who agreed to preside at the dinner. The assembled guests had to wait some time for the old showman, who knew the value of a good "entrance." When at length he did arrive he beamed on everybody, and declared that the compliment of being invited to a dinner in his honour was the more gratifying as it was totally unexpected. "The old rascal," said Sala; "why, he arranged it himself, and it is he who is paying for it."

None the less did Sala make an excellent speech in proposing the "old rascal's" health. It was to the effect that Barnum was one of the great men of the world, and that as a matter of fact all the great men of the world have been Barnums. There were Alexander Barnum and Julius Cæsar Barnum and Hannibal Barnum and Napoleon Bonaparte Barnum. All Barnums! There was this distinction, however, between them and their friend of the circus. Alexander Barnum and Julius Cæsar Barnum and Hannibal Barnum and Napoleon Bonaparte Barnum made widows and orphans. Now what did Phineas T. Barnum do? He rejoiced the hearts of the widow and the orphan—and so forth, all this and more banter of the same kind being given out in a rattling, dashing style that was irresistible.

In what good after-dinner speaking consists it would be difficult to say. Humorous persiflage such as Sala's is an indispensable ingredient, but to attain the highest success in the art it is necessary to add, as in the best *vers de société*, just a little touch of sentiment. This is where Robinson

excelled. His manner as a speaker, although very good until the last two or three years of his life, when his voice perceptibly weakened, was not so effective as Sala's, but he was fully equal to Sala as a humorist, while his sentiment seemed more spontaneous, more sincere. No one who heard it will readily forget Robinson's speech at the Newspaper Press Fund dinner in 1897, wherein, after indulging in all sorts of playful allusions to the reporter's craft, he drew an exquisite little picture of the ideal reporter's wife, who does not sit in the Parliamentary Gallery, or go up in a balloon, or down in a mine, but who nevertheless plays her part, that of helper and comforter.

On the occasion of that gathering, although the secretary of the fund had expressed a fear that the subscription list would be a bad one owing to its being Jubilee year, the eloquence of the chairman, or at all events his popularity combined with his eloquence, was such that the subscriptions amounted to no less than £3620, that being just double the record up to that time.

After-dinner speeches, however good, are seldom very effective in print. So much depends upon the circumstances under which they are delivered. Pointed allusions to persons have to be fully understood to hit the mark. In other words, there must be a certain sympathy between the speaker and his audience. In spite of this, however, it may be well to put on record a little speech of Robinson's at a dinner at the Reform Club in 1893, which was allowed to have great merit by those who heard it. The dinner was given by Mr. William Black in Robinson's honour, and there were present Mr. (Sir) Walter Besant,

Mr. Justin M'Carthy, Mr. H. W. Lucy, Mr. R. C. Lehmann, Mr. Colin Hunter, R.A., Mr. Alfred Parsons, R.A., Mr. Richard Whiteing, Mr. (Sir) T. Wemyss Reid, and Mr. P. W. Clayden.

Robinson's health having been proposed by the giver of the feast, this was the reply :—

MY FRIENDS—I do not feel that I can sit silent in the midst of your kindness. And yet it is difficult to speak. You see, a host of recollections sweep over my mind at this moment, and I should be cold and dead indeed if the embers were not stirred. It is nearer fifty than forty years since I started out in the world with pencil and note-book to fend for myself, and a deal has happened in that time. I find the past and present blending in the oddest kind of way. I have had the greatest trouble in checking myself from suggesting this evening to Mr. Black half-a-dozen topics for treatment during the coming week, forgetful of the fact that many years have passed since the *Daily News* had any claim upon the productions of his genius. But a glance round brings me to face with things of to-day.

Near me is Mr. Clayden, whose unbroken good temper and constant kindness and sympathy are of the greatest comfort to me. And the activity of the man! I declare that at times I am discussing with him the paper of the following day, and a quarter of an hour later he is haranguing a crowded audience at Islington on the iniquities of Her Majesty's Conservative Opposition (laughter). Yet another hour and he is somewhere in the neighbourhood of Tavistock Square, delighting an assembly of ladies of various age (laughter) by proving to their excited satisfaction their intellectual superiority to the contemptible race of men (laughter). Yet a little later he is trying—too often in vain—to withstand the tyranny of the master printer over the momentous question as to what shall go in the paper and what shall be left out (laughter).

Then there is Mr. Whiteing. I like to think that in his fine mind there lie whole continents of rich thought, all waiting to be harvested in the columns of a certain daily paper. I look upon him as another Thomas Carlyle, without the pessimism, and with a style (laughter) better adapted to everyday journalism and to a race which has now some little acquaintance with the science of music (laughter and cheers). Mr. Lucy! I am glad to say that neither the flatteries of statesmen nor the blandishments—very tender and embracing as I have heard—of duchesses (laughter) have enticed him as yet from the paper he has served so long and so well. I do not often go to the House of Commons in these days, but when I do, I declare it seems to me that the real Speaker is not Mr. Peel but Mr. Lucy, and that the mace ought to lie stretched before him in the Reporters' Gallery (cheers).

My dear Justin M'Carthy! My friends, it must be a blessed thing for a public man who has been for many years in public life to have it said of him that he has not an enemy in the world (loud cheers). But more than that can be said of M'Carthy (cheers). There is no one in the world who has known him—and Mr. Chamberlain himself, were he here, would echo my words (laughter and cheers)—who is not his friend (cheers). But there are others upon whom I can only look, as it were, longingly. I feel something as a foreign visitor must feel who is present at some military manœuvres, and who sighs to himself as he says: "Would those sinews, those handsome legs (laughter), those speaking eyes were mine!" (laughter).

What a paper that would be which, in addition to the warriors I have named, could add the genius of Walter Besant (cheers), the ripe experience, the knowledge of the world, the literary ability of Wemyss Reid (cheers), the young strength, the daring, the audacity of Rudolph Lehmann (cheers). Let the imagination go further, and as this is the day for illustrations, let us include also the fine creations, the delicate, exquisite work of Colin Hunter and Alfred Parsons (cheers). Alas, my friends, I am obliged to remember that for all this would be necessary

the purse not of a Rothschild, for that is now of little account (laughter), but of an Astor, that American Monte Cristo who, it is said, is determined to **show** the world that in literary things gold is lord of all (laughter).

Well, my friends, let me thank you all from my heart. First our gentle host. I hold it an honour to be numbered among his friends. To be among his admirers is no distinction, for they consist of every reader of our mother tongue in whatever part of the world they may live (cheers). Your presence here to-night will be treasured as the highest honour—let the other be what it may—that I can ever receive, as it also at the same moment awakens the dearest pleasure and the warmest gratitude my mind is able to experience.

How happily did the speaker here, while complimenting the artists and others, hit off the little peculiarities of his colleagues! Only of course one must know something of the men. Banter such as this from a less skilful speaker might easily give offence. Of Robinson it may safely be said that, although he made numerous speeches of the kind, never in his life did he hurt any man's feelings.

After-dinner speakers are not always so happy in their allusions. Sometimes they mistake their man. At the dinner of foreign journalists already referred to, one gentleman remarked that it was gratifying to find journalists of almost all nationalities represented. "I understand," he said, "that we have even a Chinese journalist present," and he gazed at M. Albert Wolff, the famous *salonnier* or art critic of the Paris *Figaro*, who, with his yellow beardless face, was certainly very like a Chinaman. Wolff, who did not understand a word of English, bowed low, and it is probable that to his dying



day he thought some great compliment had been paid to him.

An almost equally ludicrous scene was witnessed at a dinner given at the Savoy Hotel, the host being a rich Armenian, who had invited sympathisers with his country. Mr. F. S. Stevenson, chairman of the Anglo-Armenian Association, was among the speakers, and he elected to speak in French, in which language he is very proficient. As he spoke the host's face was a study. "Well," he seemed to say, "I have heard a good deal of gibberish to-night, and here is another variety of it." The fact was he could no more understand French than English. Mr. Stevenson's well-meant effort was wasted.

## CHAPTER XXVII

Some foreign celebrities : Kossuth, Mazzini, Garibaldi—Anecdote of Victor Emmanuel—Lord Houghton's *mot*—The Sultan in London—The Shah—Eminent Frenchmen : Thiers, About, Taine, etc.—The chambers at Versailles—Prince Henry of Prussia : his story of an incident at Queen Victoria's Jubilee—Bismarck's rebuke to the old Emperor.

"THE struggle for liberty and unity in Italy is almost forgotten, but not by me," said Robinson on the last occasion on which he addressed his journalistic colleagues, and he went on : "I see again the pale face of Mazzini, the apostle of Italian unity, with eyes that fascinated one, with a voice that thrilled like the voice of Kean or Kemble, and made one ready to start for Milan at once should he desire it. We court the alliance of Italy in these days, but at the outset of her struggle there were comparatively few in England who did not denounce her scattered sons for their gallant and, as it seemed, hopeless efforts." The speaker's own sympathies brought him into personal contact early in his London career with great leaders of national movements. "Ah ! that shabby old room in Bouverie Street in the old times," he said, "glows like a palace in my thoughts. Garibaldi trod that rickety floor ; Kossuth in his braided coat did not shrink from the risk of sitting on the

cane-bottomed chairs ; Mazzini leaned on its ink-spotted desk."

The most fascinating of this famous trio perhaps was Kossuth, the Hungarian dictator, whose progress through England in 1851 was one great blaze of triumph. He was a singularly handsome man, and he spoke our language with wonderful fluency and effect, even though his style was purely literary and full of archaisms borrowed from Shakespeare, whose works he had studied in prison. Above all he represented a cause with which all Englishmen sympathised. The Hungarian rebellion against the tyranny of Austria had only been put down with the help of the Russians, whose interference in the matter was fiercely resented. No doubt the Crimean War was a blunder, and many find it difficult nowadays to understand what were the causes that led to it. One of them, and a powerful one, was undoubtedly the action of the Russian Government in snatching from the Hungarians the fruits of victory just as they were within their grasp, and putting that wretched people once more under the yoke of their oppressors.

There was something in Kossuth's appearance that struck the imagination of the people. He was dressed in a short, black velvet frock coat, with black bugles and braid on the front, and wide, open sleeves. In attendance on him was a courier in a cavalry jacket with gold lace on the breast and a tricolour sash and gold stripes on his pantaloons. For a time the Hungarian leader was the rage. Douglas Jerrold suggested a novel kind of subscription on his behalf.

"It is written in the brief history made known to us of Kossuth," said the English writer, "that

in an Austrian prison he was taught English by the words of the teacher Shakespeare. An Englishman's blood glows with the thought that, from the quiver of the immortal Saxon, Kossuth has furnished himself with those arrowy words that kindle as they fly—words that are weapons, as Austria will know. Would it not be a graceful tribute to the genius of the man who has stirred our nation's heart, to present to him a copy of Shakespeare? To do this, I would propose a penny subscription. The large amount of money obtained by these means, the cost of the work itself being small, might be expended on the binding of the volumes, and on a casket to contain them. There are hundreds of thousands of Englishmen who would rejoice thus to endeavour to manifest their gratitude to Kossuth for the glorious words he has uttered among us, words that have been as pulses to the nation."

Jerrold further suggested that collecting boxes should be put up in the offices of those newspapers which sympathised with the aspirations of the Hungarian people. The project was taken up with enthusiasm, and in a brief space of time over 9000 people had subscribed. A gorgeously bound copy of Knight's Shakespeare, ornamented with the arms of the distinguished exile, elaborately decorated in crimson silk and gold and enclosed in a beautiful carved frame, was purchased with the money, and the testimonial was duly presented at a gathering at the London Tavern, over which Lord Dudley Stuart, M.P., presided. On the front was a silver plate with the inscription: "Purchased with 9215 pence, subscribed by English men and women, as a tribute to Louis

Kossuth, who achieved his noble mastery of the English language, to be exercised in the noblest cause, from the page of Shakespeare."

When the recipient rose to acknowledge the gift there was a demonstration such as those who witnessed it never forgot. Kossuth began by apologising for venturing with his broken English once more to offend the language in which Shakespeare wrote and Douglas Jerrold had just charmed their ears. It was a fine speech nevertheless that the Hungarian patriot made, full of hope for the future. So long as the public opinion of the world, he said, continued to cheer them with its sympathy, the oppressed millions would never despair. But what interested his hearers most was the following passage of an autobiographical character :—

For having dared to claim my lawful right, I was in prison till the voice of my nation's universal indignation released me. For months I was there in the damp, lonely chamber, seeing neither the sky nor the earth, with none of those inexhaustible consolations which bountiful nature affords to misfortune and sufferings. And there I was without a book to read, without a pen to write ; there I was with God, with my tranquil conscience, and with meditation alone (cheers). But it is fearful to be thus alone, with nothing to arrest the musing eye. Imagination raises its dreadful wings and carries the mind in a magnetic flight to portentous regions, of which no philosophy has ever dreamt. I gathered up all the strength of my mind, and bade it stop that dangerous soaring (cheers). It was done, but I got afraid of myself (cheers). So I told my gaolers to give me something to read. "Yes," answered they, "but nothing political." "Well, give me Shakespeare, with an English grammar and a dictionary ; that you will take, I trust,

not to be political." "Of course not," answered they, and gave it to me, and there I sat musing over it. For months it was a sealed book to me, as the hieroglyphics long were to Champollion, and as Layard's Assyrian monuments still are. But at last the light spread over me, and I drank in full cups, which never quenched thirst, from that limpid source of delightful instruction and of instructive delight. Thus I learnt the little English I know.

Mazzini, who sought the acquaintance of Robinson, having been struck by an article of his on the Italian question, was not unlike Kossuth in the face. In the forehead and upper parts the likeness indeed was singular. In other respects he was a man of a totally different stamp. He avoided display, and though at his public appearances there was about him the air of a man fitted to lead and command, he shrank, when the task was over, from the curiosity of the enthusiastic ladies who begged an introduction. For the Italian tribune had no less ardent admirers than the Hungarian dictator, though their numbers were fewer. It was evident that Mazzini would rather be inditing a crushing reply to a French general within range of the artillery of three armies, than repeating soft phrases to fair ones who expressed sympathy with his cause. His English was almost absolutely perfect, although his pronunciation was bad, and he was compelled to prepare his discourses.

As he spoke, the emotional expressions of his features were very remarkable. The colour mounted to his cheeks, and the eye shot glances of fire. When he declared that the popular flag "shall yet shine on the Alps, shine on the sea, shine on the Vatican," the whole man seemed

changed ; the breast heaved with the proud thought, and there was an expression on the face as though a sunbeam had suddenly illumined it. When he spoke of the miserable system which in Italy assumed the name of religion, or of the corpse of French scepticism, there was a look of scorn for which an artist might have been thankful, but it remained for a moment only. He was unaccustomed to use the whips of sarcasm, and not the least honourable fact in his history was that a life of exile had not imparted to his nature the least tinge of misanthropy.

In this country Mazzini earned the respect and esteem of all who made his acquaintance. In Italy he was idolised. He went secretly to Milan in 1853, to organise the insurrection of that year, and his presence there was known to hundreds, perhaps thousands. Yet, although a high price was offered by the Austrian Government for his head, not one was found to betray him. He stayed in the Lombardian capital for one month after the insurrection had been put down, and then effected his escape once more to England. As regards his political convictions it is difficult to speak with certainty. "I knew him for years," said Robinson, "and did not often hear him allude to them. And then there is a phraseology of big words—shall I call it a cant?—about the new Italy school, which needs a special education before it is clearly understood. Putting aside his attacks on the Italian Government, and arriving at the core, I think we find it to be this: the Papacy and Catholicism he believed to be dead beyond the power of galvanisation ; it could never again be what it once was, the ruler and director of the

consciences of the people. Those who attacked the Prince of Rome, and yet professed to venerate the Pope and to be sincere Catholics, were either guilty of flagrant contradiction or were hypocrites. A source of corruption equally, in his opinion, pernicious, was materialism, which was historically, he said, an old phenomenon, inseparable from the death of a dogma. The wretched doctrine of materialism, recognising the intervention neither of any creative intelligence, divine initiative, nor human free will, condemned humanity to tread eternally the same circle without any conception of the spiral path of indefinite progress upon which humanity traced its gradual ascent towards an ideal beyond."

Garibaldi was too much engaged in those wonderful expeditions of his to spend much time out of his own country, but his visit to London is well remembered, for he too, like Kossuth, was the lion of a season. He was entertained by a Duke, the ladies wore red blouses in imitation of him, and wherever he went he made a triumphal progress. It was one summer morning in 1864 that Robinson's friend Mr. Negretti, the well-known optician and the friend of all Italian patriots, asked him whether he would like to have a chat with Garibaldi. "Come along," he said; "he'll be pleased to see you," and accordingly the two went off together to Stafford House.

The noble old fellow was in a little, plainly furnished bedroom. He was in his pants and was sitting on an iron bedstead, washing his face and rubbing it with a hard towel. Negretti told him who I was, when, grasping my hand and looking into my eyes with an expression of sweetness I can never forget, he said: "You are a friend



to my country, and from the bottom of my heart I *thank* you." The tears came into my eyes as I shook hands with the pure, simple-hearted, grand old patriot.

Although he did so much for the cause of Italian unity, Garibaldi was rather a thorn in the side of Victor Emmanuel and his constitutional advisers. Statesmen and diplomats are such cautious folk. One of Mr. Negretti's stories was to the effect that on the occasion of Garibaldi's landing in Sicily, the *Re galant' uomo* said to the French envoy, M. D'Ideville: "Mon Dieu! It would no doubt be a great misfortune, but if the Neapolitan cruisers were to hang my poor Garibaldi, he would have brought his sad fate upon himself, and things would be greatly simplified. What a fine monument we would raise to him!"

Garibaldi spoke of the *Italia Irredenta*. Like all Italian patriots he was furious with Louis Napoleon for having taken Nice and Savoy as the price of the assistance he had offered to the Italians in the first instance in the sacred name of liberty. The situation was well summed up in a *mot* of Lord Houghton's. At one of Lady Palmerston's soirées, a French attaché on his way to the refreshment room said to him: "Je vais prendre quelque chose."—"Vous avez raison," was Lord Houghton's reply; "c'est l'habitude de votre pays."

Soon after Garibaldi's visit, London went mad about the Sultan of Turkey, who came over here in state. "I would wager," said Thackeray, "that if Mr. Widdicomb were by a revolution placed on the throne of Brentford, people would be fascinated by his irresistibly majestic smile, and tremble as they knelt down to kiss his hand." The Sultan was idolised. Frequenters of the Opera House

cheered when the company sang some execrable lines which made him the special favourite of the Almighty :—

God of all glory,  
Power and renown,  
Grant he before Thee  
May still wear a crown !  
Then may he hear Thee  
Praise and adore,  
Joyfully hear Thee  
His God evermore.

But even this was surpassed at the Crystal Palace, where the Mussulman potentate composedly listened to a piece which described the sun as disappearing with fear and dread at the coming of the brighter star. London was pictured as having made herself fresh and fair as a bride for this mighty ruler. "Happy day for England's people !" said the prostrate poet.

As the sun he spreads his radiance, all men may his kindness share,  
Sons of Islam call him Father, Christians own his kindly care.

The frenzied poets went too far. All at once the "Turkish Missions Aid Society" remembered that it would endanger their proselytisings if they put a Mussulman and polygamist into heaven in this way. They would not have objected perhaps, as he was a sovereign, to leave the matter in doubt with a "reasonable hope," pointing to just a corner of the curtain under which he could creep, but this celestial coronation rather disturbed their projects. The Mussulman "holy men" might put their hands on the odes. Meanwhile the Sultan moved about, cold and impassive to all appearance, and manifesting not the slightest interest in anything he saw. He was heard to express himself rather unfavourably on the subject of English

women. They were not nearly so pretty, he said, as he had expected. Here is an extract from our diaries bearing upon this :—

I have been at most of the grand entertainments given in honour of the Sultan, and nothing has struck me so much as the deterioration of the women of the richer classes. I was one of a crowd at a ball the other night, given in an extravagant style, and attended by the Prince of Wales and his friends. Out of the two or three thousand ladies there, I think I saw scarcely one in fifty who could be called really pretty. It is among the professional families, who lead quieter lives, that we see the greatest physical attractions.

The fuss that was made over the Shah of Persia in 1873 was more intelligible, since it had to some extent a political meaning. The Czar's eldest son, who was over here at the same time, looked on, for he was present at all the festivities, and smiled as though some quiet thought amused him. He read in it a demonstration against Russia, and he was not altogether wrong. But the popular curiosity was aroused also by the Shah's personality. He seemed so mysterious a potentate, and the stories about him were so odd ! One was to the effect that he was not the real Shah at all ; others related to his barbarous behaviour in polite society. It was said that in Berlin he spat from his box at the Opera on the people beneath. In England, however, he committed no solecisms. His manner was polite and even engaging, and those who had an opportunity of seeing him were easily convinced that he knew how to behave himself like an ordinary gentleman.

Among Frenchmen of distinction, Robinson counted a good many friends and acquaintances.

He was especially intimate with Henri Taine, whose *History of English Literature* won for him an honorary degree of Oxford University, and whose *Notes on England* is the best book on this country ever written by a Frenchman ; Victor Schoelcher, the anti-slavery leader, and Edmond Scherer, the editor of the *Temps*. Thiers he knew slightly, as also Prévost-Paradol, Henri Rochefort, Edmond About, and Alphonse Daudet. Prévost-Paradol, Scherer, and Schoelcher were very fine English scholars. The last-named lived for many years at Chelsea, where he had a library of 14,000 volumes, many of them works of great value. He was a rich man, who took to politics as a hobby. Taine knew English well, but had a strong French accent. Rochefort, who even now can hardly speak English at all, although he was so long resident among us, came to London just before the war, on a mission connected with a proposed issue of an English edition of the *Lanterne*. Here is an appreciation of the editor of the *Intransigeant*, written more than thirty years ago, that shows true insight judged by what we now know of him :—

Rochefort's *Lanterne* was enjoying a great success in Belgium, and he had been told that a weekly translation would be equally popular here. I did all I could to dissuade him from the project, and I believe he was not personally concerned in the publication of the three or four copies which followed. The impression left upon me was that Rochefort knew nothing of politics. I do not like to say he cared nothing for them, but to him they were simply useful as affording scope for his marvellous gift of satire. The Rochefort school of writers are the bane of France, but they are confined to no one political set. M. de Cassagnac is infinitely more dangerous.

During the siege Rochefort, to do him justice, did wonders in keeping the mob peaceful.

About was one of the wittiest of talkers ; Scherer and Taine were good friends and excellent companions. At Scherer's invitation, Robinson paid a visit to Paris in 1873, and had a talk with M. Thiers, of which, however, he has unfortunately only left a very brief account.

April 17th, 1873.—The little man (M. Thiers) amazes strangers who approach him by his physique and his animal spirits. He delights in hard work, and says he hardly knows which he likes best, late hours or early hours. My friend said to me the other day : "We will not go until eleven o'clock." "Isn't that rather late?" I asked. "Oh, he likes late hours," was the reply. "He never goes to bed before midnight, and he is up by seven o'clock in the morning." The contest between MM. de Rémusat and Barodet was the engrossing subject of conversation at the Elysée that night, the friends of the former being greatly in the majority. It was assumed as a matter of course that my opinion would be in the same direction, but the assumption was incorrect. The treatment of Lyons by the Government and the Chamber is as bad in the eyes of a lover of civil freedom as the *Coup d'Etat* itself. M. Barodet, as the dispossessed Mayor, had peculiar claims on the sympathy of the Paris Republicans.

French politics are very interesting just now. The "crisis" is expected to take place directly after the evacuation of the country by the German troops. The large towns will then insist on a dissolution of the Assembly, and the majority in the Assembly will insist upon remaining. M. Thiers is between the two—now trying to please one, now trying to please the other. The Versailles palace is a delicious abode for a body of men who have to meet there for a few hours a day. The theatre in which they sit is pleasanter than an ordinary temple of the drama. The rooms in which the com-

missions perform their work are elegance itself compared with the committee rooms of the House of Commons. Splendid paintings hang on the walls, and rich marble vies with costly furniture in producing the impression of luxury. If a legislator steps to the window, he looks over the glorious Park with its exquisite avenues of trees ; its noble terraces and sculptured figures ; its fountains and its flowers.

The long ante-room in which members walk about and smoke, and in which M. Gambetta will be seen chatting with the Duc de Broglie, or M. Louis Blanc with Bishop Dupanloup, presents one of the liveliest of spectacles. The public hear only of the excited debates, of the interruptions, the calls to order, the President's bell (I rang it, and it was fully as loud as an ordinary bell at a railway station), but the incidents in the other parts of the building are, to me at least, more entertaining.

Tourgueneff, the Russian novelist, is thus described in 1879 :—

Tourgueneff speaks English with comparative ease. He is a tall, well-made man, with grey hair, apparently sixty years of age. He has a kindly, genial expression, and in this respect contrasted strangely with the impassive Henry James, the American novelist, who stood by his side while I was introduced to the Muscovite author. M. Tourgueneff told me he had some hesitation in returning to Russia, where the confused state of society rendered it difficult for him to write freely, though his personal safety might not be endangered.

It seems that Tourgueneff did not feel quite sure as to what the Government of his country might do. Certainly its ways are strange. A Russian lady who was well known in English society some years ago, used to send reports on all sorts of subjects to St. Petersburg. One day she made an amazing discovery. She had a quarrel

with her confidential maid, and this led to the discovery that the latter had acted for years as a spy upon her mistress, and had sent accounts of her doings from time to time to the Russian Foreign Office. Perhaps the maid had also had a spy upon her.

Of German personages we have some brief jottings. The present Emperor as seen at Windsor and afterwards at the Guildhall in 1891, is described as "quite boyish-looking. It is difficult to believe that that slight form and weak, juvenile cast of features belong to a man of strong will and character." His English is absolutely perfect, and when he speaks it no one would take him for anything but an Englishman. His brother, Prince Henry, told a good story in connection with the Jubilee procession of 1897. He and his compatriots were hissed at some parts of the route, and at one place, where the procession halted for a moment, a big fellow put his hands to the side of his mouth and shouted: "There's a telegraph office round the corner. Wouldn't you like to send another message?" The allusion of course was to the famous Imperial message to President Kruger. The Prince laughed good-naturedly at the recollection.

General Sir E. Hamley told a good story of the old Emperor William and Bismarck. The scene was at the German military manœuvres. At lunch one day Hamley sat close to Bismarck, with the Emperor not far off. Bismarck, talking rather loudly, described the old monarch as being generous but very forgetful. Hamley got nervous, as he thought the Emperor would hear. "For instance," continued Bismarck, "I pleased him the other day,

and he asked me what he could do for me. I said : ' Give me a dozen of that Tokay you have in your cellars,' and he said he would ; but," added Bismarck, raising his voice still higher, " he hasn't done it." Here Hamley hastily broke in : " I beg your pardon, but I am really afraid the Emperor will hear you." " I want him to hear me," roared Bismarck ; " that's just what I want " : and a smile broke over the rugged old face of his Imperial master.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

At the Reform Club—A snug corner—James Payn : some whimsical letters—William Black : birthday celebration—Sir A. Conan Doyle : his letter descriptive of America and the Americans—George A. Sala and the pawnbroker—J. C. Parkinson—Sir T. Wemyss Reid—The strange story of Chicago Smith.

IT was as long ago as 1856 that Robinson became a member of his favourite club, the Reform. The secretary's letter announcing his election was written on April 3 of that year, and a note dated from New Inn and signed "Shirley Brooks" followed hard upon, in which the genial editor of *Punch* offered his best congratulations, "which indeed," he added, "should rather be addressed to the Club itself on the accession of a worthy member." Brooks was himself a member of the Club, and had strongly supported his friend's candidature. Thenceforth, for over forty-seven years, Robinson was almost a daily visitor to that cosy retreat, for he rarely went out of town, and he was essentially what Dr. Johnson called a clubbable man. Every day, as regularly as clockwork, he would walk or take an omnibus from Fleet Street to Pall Mall at the mid-day luncheon hour. He took an active part in the promotion of the National Liberal Club, but was rarely seen there except when the Reform was closed for redecoration, and

then he was for the time like a fish out of water. He missed the friends whom he met at the luncheon table in Pall Mall.

That table was quite an institution, a club within a club. Theoretically any member could sit there, but the regular frequenters came to be considered as having a prescriptive right to it. What laughter came from that snug little corner! James Payn, the author of *Lost Sir Massingberd*, called "Waterloo Payn" because he was born on the anniversary of that victory, was a regular attendant, and his laugh could almost be heard from the Guards' Memorial. His flow of wit was incessant. "Do you notice how prevalent lumbago is just now?" he was asked one day. "Yes," was the ready answer, "it has quite doubled the population." Passing along Pall Mall in winter time, he observed a great heap of snow piled up in the little street that runs between the Carlton and Reform Clubs. "Pity there is such a coolness between those two clubs," he remarked. An old lady of his acquaintance, he declared, had only two teeth left, but the dear old soul said that "Providence had been very kind, for these, most happily, were immediately opposite each other."

For Robinson, Payn had quite a brotherly attachment which was fully reciprocated, and among his many occupations, for he was one of the most industrious literary men of his day, he could spare time to write delightful little letters bubbling over with characteristic humour. This is in acknowledgment of a present of some rather large-sized cigars on his birthday :—

43 WARRINGTON CRESCENT, MAIDA VALE.

MY DEAR ROBBY—I shall not live to get through them ; no, not even if I smoked one a day, *i.e.*, for six hours. Shall I have a codicil in my will to state that what are left are yours ? How very good it is of you to smooth my path so agreeably. The possession of them has done me much good in life. Some people who have seen them think I am rich, though it is true others are doubtful how I came by them. Tradespeople who see me smoking as I sit at the window give me credit. Even —— does it. I gave one to an eminent person. He said : “But you are not smoking anything so fine yourself ?” I said with great humility : “I am not in a social position to do so.” He repeats this to everybody. “Do you think,” he says, “he was serious or only joking ?” But the cigars are at least no joke.—Yours always,

JAMES PAYN.

The success of the little present led to another of a similar kind the following year, which was acknowledged as follows :—

43 WARRINGTON CRESCENT, MAIDA VALE.

MY DEAR ROBINSON—It is *Immense*. It is the only thing about which I can say : I have the very best that can be got. My Lords (at the Club) say : “Where the deuce do you get them from ?” They perceive that they are beyond my means. I say : “They are given to me.” This they do not believe. Nobody gives *them* such cigars. ——, I am told, could not afford such if he had to pay ready money for them.

I lit one on Sunday at the “Hall,” Bushey, and I was smoking it when I reached home. This is how time had to be measured before the invention of watches. But these cigars are for eternity. I thought of telling you the other day that I had a whole box of them absolutely untouched. I am so very glad I didn’t. It is now certain that I have enough to last me for the rest of my unnatural life. No adversity can deprive me of *them*.

However poor I may be, I shall still smoke the best cigars in England. I only smoke them after a bad action, or some excess, so that with a man of my principles they last for ever. It is very kind of you to send me such a noble gift. Even if you were a cigar manufacturer, it would be handsome, just as if we got those peaches from that Yorkshireman with houses full of them; but to procure them from that excellent——, a name previously unknown to me but now most dear, is an act of benevolence indeed. It is good of you to think of me. You should see George smelling round that box.—Yours ever,

JAMES PAYN.

“George,” it may be mentioned, is his son, Mr. George Payn. The “Yorkshireman” was Sir Isaac Holden, a very wealthy member of the Reform Club who used to entertain his friends with descriptions of his miles of hot-houses. The subject was rather a standing joke because Payn, knowing that the stolid, matter-of-fact Holden was incapable of taking a hint, used to make dark allusions to the advantages of such possessions, as it enabled one to send “such splendid presents of grapes and peaches to one’s friends.” The reference to the writer’s “unnatural” life gives a pathetic touch to the second letter, as Payn was for some years before his death in a precarious state of health, although his sufferings were borne with gentleness and fortitude. His was essentially the literary temperament. There was a look of misery on his face that was almost pathetic when he sat next to a prominent statesman at dinner one evening, and the latter began to illustrate some theory of land tenure with an A, a B, and a C; and he himself told how, on being introduced to a distinguished Egyptologist, who began talking of Assyrian “tablets,” he honestly thought at first

that they were something to eat, a sort of quack remedy for indigestion, and responded in that sense.

Some of Payn's novels, of which he had written a great many (already in 1878 he had published thirty-three, besides short stories innumerable), were translated into more than one foreign language. A lady who was entrusted with the rendering of one of them into German, found one expression of the meaning of which she was not quite certain. She wrote to him therefore to say that she had translated Christy Minstrels "the minstrels of our Lord," and she trusted this was correct. A striking testimony to Payn's popularity is found in the fact that during his long illness the members of the Baldwin Club made up small parties to go to his house regularly and play whist, a game of which he was so fond that he called it his "daily bread."

Others in merry circle at different times were Mr. W. H. Wills of *Household Words*, Mr. George Augustus Sala, Mr. J. C. Parkinson, Mr. William Black, Sir T. Wemyss Reid, Mr. G. W. E. Russell (the brilliant author of *Collections and Recollections*), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and occasionally Sir John Bridge, Mr. Charles Mathews (the counsel to the Treasury), and Mr. H. W. Lucy. Black was an old colleague at the *Daily News*, although he soon abandoned journalism for the more attractive (and in his case more lucrative) pursuit of novel-writing. Here is a sketch of him in 1891 :—

Nov. 14th, 1891, was celebrated as W. Black's birthday—the real day is the 15th. Fifty years old! His face, sun-burnt, shrewd, unwrinkled, did not speak

of half-a-century. I should have guessed he was forty. His friend Mr. Osgood, the publisher, gave a dinner at the Reform Club, and a large cluster of literary men and artists got together round the board. There was Du Maurier, proud of having finished his novel, nervous, pale, and excitable; Alfred Parsons, good-looking and good-natured, talking about his voyage to Japan; Colin Hunter, Scotch to the backbone; Pettie, older and very white-haired; Bret Harte, less changed than any of us; and E. Marston, one of my favourites among publishers, nearly seventy but very young for his age. I sat between Parsons and Frank Millet—to me a most interesting man because he is associated with one of the most stirring periods in *Daily News* history.

It was Millet who crossed the Balkans and was at Plevna. He is now a delightful artist, getting large sums for his pictures. His face is shaved clean, save for a moustache, and he is still young-looking. He has lately visited the scenes of the war in company with Parsons, and we had it all over. Black, after returning thanks, suddenly rose and said he had forgotten to allude to “that little annuity” they had so kindly arranged to settle upon him, and later on some one proposed a “subscription,” at which there was a roar and all at once pleaded another engagement and pretended to make for the door. Millet in a neat little speech said that he and Parsons had been scouring Europe with the object of finding some one who had not read Black’s novels, and that failing in the attempt, they had resolved to name certain places after him; such as the Black Sea, the Black Forest, and so on. At one time they thought of the “William Black Sea,” but they finally decided to leave the Christian name out. When I left the revelry was at its height.

Black was not a good public speaker. At the Lord Mayor’s dinner to the representatives of literature in 1881, at which Mr. Blackmore was also present, he paid a very graceful compliment

to the latter by saying that in America some one had congratulated him (Black) on being the greatest living English novelist, and that he had been much gratified until he found the person who was addressing him mistook him for the author of *Lorna Doone*. Unfortunately he hesitated so much and told the story so awkwardly, that many who heard him thought he was praising himself! In private, however, he was a very pleasing talker with a fund of good stories. One of them was that the editor of a periodical in which his *White Wings* appeared in serial form, wrote to him in sending the final instalment of proofs: “The last proofs, alas!” and by the same post wrote to the artist who was illustrating the story: “The last proofs, thank Heaven,” and he and the artist, who were friends, afterwards compared notes. Another story of his was about two Scottish tailors who went on a little tour together in the Highlands and were much struck by the beauty of the scenery. Standing together on the side of a mountain and looking upon a broad sheet of water, one of them, after a pause, exclaimed: “Ay, Sandy, it’s a braw *fit*.”

Letters such as the following show that he did not forget his old chief:—

BALLIFEARY HOUSE, INVERNESS, N.B.,  
Aug. 25th, 1896.

MY DEAR ROBINSON—In the capital of the Highlands, in the chief thoroughfare of that capital, in the chief stationer’s shop in that thoroughfare, in the chief position in that stationer’s shop, there is displayed a large photograph. And of whom should the photograph be, if not of your noble self? Hurrah for us!—Yours faithfully,

WILLIAM BLACK.

Another ever-welcome figure at the table was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, of whose "hearty, jovial, frank manner" mention is made in our notes. One bond of sympathy between him and Robinson was their appreciation of the American people, and from this point of view, as well as on account of its intrinsic interest, the following letter, one of the many which the popular author wrote to his journalist friend when away from London, finds a fitting place in this volume :—

AMHERST HOUSE, AMHERST, MASS.,  
Nov. 3rd, 1894.

MY DEAR ROBINSON—May I make you my mouth-piece in conveying my warm remembrances to friends of the Reform, above all to Payn and Reid? Also to Parkinson and Barclay, should you see them.

I have been five weeks here, and "it's a great country, Sir." I came, as you know, with high expectations, but the reality far surpasses them. Naturally I have only seen the pleasanter side of life, but still I have already travelled many thousands of miles and seen many towns, so that I have some experience from which to talk. The people are far more lovable than I expected, so good-humoured and affable, infinitely more so than our own folk. There never was a country so maligned by the travelling Briton as this one. He has picked out all the little things to talk about and missed all the big ones. Every globe-trotter has paragraphs about the number of spittoons in a hotel bar (as if it matters!), but they pass over such trifles as that there are no hereditary chamber and no landlords. There is an absence of affectation and a kindly frankness, too, on all hands which is not to be computed in spittoons. They are naturally hurt at being so maligned, and we have estranged them considerably, though not, I think, irredeemably.

By Jove, when I see all these folk with their British names and British tongues, and when I consider how far



they have been allowed to drift from us, I feel as if we ought to have a statesman from every lamp-post in Pall Mall. We've got to go into partnership with them, or else to be overshadowed by them. The centre of gravity of the race is over here, and we have got to readjust ourselves. I've done what I could by tongue and pen over here to plant some seeds. Some of them may sprout. Who knows? We think we are influencing things and we are really floating in a current which is outside ourselves.

I have lectured at New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Detroit, Toledo, Boston, Worcester, etc. etc. etc., so, you see, I have not been stagnant. I came over here with three lectures, one on Meredith, one on the younger school of fiction (both with illustrative readings), and one which is mainly personal, with readings from my own work. This last I included under protest, owing to strong representations from Pond, my agent. His view proved to be correct, for audiences always want that one, so that I have hardly had a chance of delivering the other two. I have had very good audiences—halls full mostly—but I don't think there is much money in the business. What with the long distances, the hotel prices, the agent's commission, etc., I am sure one could earn much more at one's desk at home. But you have the education and travel gratis, and you wouldn't get that at your desk. Anyhow, I am very glad I came. I have met Howells, Cable, Eugene Field, Riley, Hamlin Garland, and most of the rising men of letters.

I leave on Dec. 8th, and I hope to reach England about the 15th. I shall spend Christmas with my family at Davos; I hope to look in at lunch time and see you all some time between those two dates.

With kindest remembrances to all friends and my very particular affection and good wishes to Payn—Yours most sincerely,

A. CONAN DOYLE.

George Augustus Sala, one of the earliest of the frequenters of the table, had an amazing memory and a copious vocabulary, combined with unflagging

industry. He seemed to have been everywhere and seen everything, and he had treasured up in his mind thousands of curious facts, which he could bring forth at any moment for illustrative purposes. When a certain society journalist published his memoirs just before the decision in a libel case in which he was defendant, Sala was asked whether he did not think it remarkable that the writer had been so polite to everybody, including even some persons whom he was supposed not to love. "No," said Sala, "for I remembered the fable of the wolf who was loudly professing to the other animals on one occasion his kindness and tenderness to them all, and appealed to the fox. 'Did you not see me the other day,' said he to Reynard, 'with a succulent lamb and a tiny goat, and did I attempt to do them any injury?' 'Yes, it was so,' replied the fox, 'but I also remember that that day *you had a bone in your throat.*'"

Sala, like so many literary men of the older school, had led a very Bohemian existence in his younger days. Once he was introduced to a celebrated pawnbroker. "How do you do, Mr. —," he said, "this is the first time I have seen your figure at *full length.*" Previously he had only seen him behind his shop counter. In later life Sala was a little too boisterous perhaps, and rather apt to take an undue share in the conversation, but he was always amusing and often instructive.

Mr. J. C. Parkinson, the author of the *Ocean Telegraph to India* and *Places and People*, who joined the table some forty years ago, was in his early days a writer on the *Express* and the *Daily News*,

in the service of which papers he displayed enterprise combined with considerable literary ability. As a special correspondent he was ready to go up in a balloon or down under the water in a diving suit, or anywhere whence a novel view of life could be obtained. Once he wrote a picturesque description of the London sewers, for which purpose he donned the long, heavy boots of the ordinary sewer-men and waded knee-deep in filth for miles, afterwards presenting himself in the unaccustomed garb in Bouverie Street for instructions. He marched into the managerial office. "Pray do not let me keep you; I would not detain you for the world," said the manager, who had become painfully aware of his presence.

Sir T. Wemyss Reid, whose fine, striking-looking face was, and happily still is, generally to be seen at the table, was intimately associated with Robinson, who had a very sincere regard for him and a high opinion of his judgment. Both lived at Kensington, and generally they would travel up to town together by the underground railway, and, getting out at Charing Cross station, take a little constitutional on the Thames Embankment on the way to their respective offices in Bouverie Street and Belle Sauvage Yard.

Among less intimate friends at the Reform Club the most remarkable was the late Mr. George Smith, who was called "Chicago Smith." For the last twenty years of his life he lived at the Club in a top bedroom. As a young man he "went West" and bought land in Chicago and Milwaukee, which he afterwards sold at a fabulous profit. He was a banker, and he boasted that he never stopped payment, even in times of

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crises when State banks all over the Union were toppling down one after another. When he died a few years ago he left property in England valued at £5,000,000, and it is believed that, with his possessions in America, he had quite double that amount. Yet when the rent of his bedroom was raised £10 per annum, it is said he nearly went frantic.

Being asked one day how he spent his time, Smith said : " When it is fine I go into the Park and hear the birds sing, and when it is wet I stay in the Club and read the newspapers and try to forget about it." He was never married. Few members of the Club knew him except by sight, for he was not of a sociable disposition, but with Robinson he would sometimes have a chat and talk about his past. Part of his large gains, he declared, was due to the loss or destruction of his bank notes. It was believed that a good many were consumed in the great fire at Chicago. The bulk of his property went to a nephew.

## CHAPTER XXIX

Knighthood—Ceremony at Osborne—The journey down—Tenniel—  
How knights are made—Dr. Richardson and the Queen—Return  
journey—New knights and their ways—The grounds and pictures  
at Osborne House—The benefit of a title.

ON the night of Wednesday, May 31, 1893, Robinson was at the Reform Club, and at ten o'clock, just as he was getting up to leave, a page brought him a letter from Mr. Gladstone, which took him completely by surprise. It was as follows :—

10 DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL,  
31st May 1893.

DEAR MR. ROBINSON—I have the pleasure to inform you that Her Majesty the Queen has empowered me to propose to you that you should receive the honour of knighthood ; and I trust it may be agreeable to you to accept the proposal, which I now tender in pursuance of Her Majesty's gracious permission.—I remain, faithfully  
yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE.

J. R. Robinson, Esq.

This letter caused the recipient a sleepless night. While delighted at the compliment it implied, he could not make up his mind whether to accept the offer or not. No man was less tainted with that snobbishness that pays homage

to a title irrespective of the merits of the bearer ; but to a distinction given for a life well spent in the public service he was never averse. The question in his mind was, Did his efforts, such as they had been, to promote the cause of right as he saw it, deserve the recognition so kindly and gracefully suggested by the statesman whom, above all others, he esteemed ? Perhaps he had a proud consciousness that this was really the case. At all events, after much self-communing, he decided to accept the offer. This is what he said in reply to Mr. Gladstone's letter :—

4 ADDISON CRESCENT, KENSINGTON, W.,  
1st June 1893.

DEAR MR. GLADSTONE—I have received your letter of the 31st ult., which, while wholly unexpected, has given me sincere pleasure.

I accept the mark of Her Majesty's favour with gratitude, coming, as it does, through the hands of a Minister for whom my respect is lifelong and profound.—I remain, dear Mr. Gladstone, very faithfully yours,  
J. R. ROBINSON.

The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.

“The worst of it is,” humorously said the new knight, “that, being a widower, I cannot allege the customary excuse that, while ‘I do not care a fig for a title, my wife insists on my accepting it in order that she may be Lady So-and-so.’” Certainly he was a little nervous as to what would be said in certain quarters, where he was looked upon (quite erroneously) as an extreme man, about his acceptance of the knighthood. He need have been under no apprehension, for he had no enemies. When the *Gazette* came out with the announce-

ment of the birthday honours, and his name appeared among them, there was not one jarring note in the chorus of approval. On the following morning, friendly articles and paragraphs, giving a sketch of his career, appeared in nearly all the newspapers in the country, and by the first post he received no fewer than fifty-eight letters of congratulation, together with some telegrams, and others followed for some time by every succeeding delivery. In connection with this he performed quite a *tour de force*. Every letter was acknowledged with his own hand, and there were not two answers alike.

Most of the leading Liberal politicians, and some of those on the Conservative side, were among those who complimented him, as well as many other eminent men in different walks in life. But the letters that pleased him most, of course, were those from old friends and comrades-in-arms. Archibald Forbes wrote declaring that the Liberal party was far too remiss in rewarding those who were steadfastly loyal and faithful to its cause, and that he ought to have had a baronetcy at least ; and the great war correspondent was not the only person who drew a contrast between the Liberal and Conservative managers in this respect.

In due course came an intimation from the Home Office with regard to the ceremony of conferring the knighthoods. The new knights were to leave Waterloo Station on August 11 by the 9.30 train due at Portsmouth Harbour at 12.4, where they were to be met and taken to Osborne. They included four brother-journalists—Mr. John Leng, M.P. for Dundee ; Mr. Hugh Gilzean-Reid ; Mr. Edward Richard Russell ; and

Mr. John Tenniel, the famous cartoonist of *Punch* ; and other well-known men, among whom were Mr. George H. Lewis, the solicitor ; Mr. Francis Powell, President of the Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Water Colours ; Dr. W. O. Priestley ; and Dr. B. W. Richardson.

The 11th of August proved to be one of the finest days of a specially delightful summer, and the trip, apart from the opportunity it offered to an observant mind of making notes of an unfamiliar phase of life, was a delightful one.

As the experience is not one that every one has happened to enjoy, the following detailed account, written the day afterwards, may prove interesting :—

We were none of us young, and some were infirm. In the matter of dress we followed our individual taste. Most of us had on sombre frock coats, but the new knights ran riot in the matter of ties. One gentleman had a white knot bursting out in a wild figurative pattern. Another had one of most original hue. I have never seen anything like it. I hope I never shall again. Dr. Richardson has had an accident, and walked with a stick. He is a dear, good-natured old fellow. We soon found our friends : mine throughout the day was Tenniel, who, though seventy-two years of age, looked one of the youngest, as he was certainly one of the best-looking of the party. We talked over the coming ceremony, the question of fees being frequently referred to. We varied as to amount. I tried to alarm the nervous by mentioning £80 as the probable sum.

Dr. Priestley is very fortunate in his features and figure. He is the popular woman's doctor to the life. His smile and benevolent air make you think at once of the poor white-faced mother and the darkened bedroom. George Lewis was the quickest, liveliest, sharpest of us all. I should not like to have him against me in any legal pro-



ceedings. We thought we should have to take the ordinary steamboat to West Cowes ; indeed we had been directed by telegram the previous night to do so, but further instructions came, and at Portsmouth Harbour the beautiful *Fire Queen* was ready to hold us to her embrace. The sea was placid, the sky clear, and the captain and crew were like the captain and crew of the *Pinafore*. Faultlessly dressed, the captain had a subdued air and trained courtesy which were unlike anything I have ever seen at sea. He spoke to his men in refined accents, and directed the movements of the ship as though he was a little ashamed of it, and in accents like those of the Master of the Ceremonies at a court ball. Some of my friends were quite captivated by him, and asked whether we would have the pleasure of his company on our return. "Oh," said he, "if I were not here, I should have to undergo the most fearful penalties. I should be hanged, drawn, and quartered at the very least."

He did not actually land us. This was done by a smaller boat, into which we crowded with some cost of comfort. There were seventeen knights in all, and we needed four carriages to take us to Osborne House. I drove alone with Tenniel. I waited for him because, to me at least, he was the most interesting person present. At the House we were received by Lord Camoys, a handsome young fellow, recalling Evelyn Wood as he was some years ago, pleasing in manner, and determined to make everything go as smoothly as possible. We took off our hats and looked about us.

At two o'clock, before seeing the Queen, we had luncheon. The table was laid in the Indian Room, which is specially remarkable for its pearly white ceiling, with wonderful scrolls and filigree work. The eye is almost dazzled. Tenniel says that some colour would be preferable. We were joined by a dozen ladies of the Court, who were all smiles and fun. I was not fortunate enough to be near one. Lady —— asked George Lewis where I was, saying she had often heard of me. He pointed me out, and I hope I was doing nothing awkward at the time.

I ate at the side of —, at the end of a long table. He was very chatty and very friendly, but he seemed to have strange notions about literature. The conversation turned somehow on *Robinson Crusoe*, and I spoke of the wondrous finish and power of that masterpiece. "Yes," he said, "it is very well written, but have you ever seen a version in rhyme?" I was a little shocked, and merely asked if such a thing was in existence. "Yes," he said; "it is infinitely superior to Defoe's narrative. It is written by a lady. I have often read parts of it to my children"; and then he quoted some lines of positive doggerel that made me shudder. I was not surprised a little later on to learn from him that he had never been able to read a line of Tennyson, and that he could not understand anybody thinking him a poet.

By this time we began to think of the presentation to the Queen. We had been about an hour at table. The ladies left, and we too rose from our seats, and slowly moved out into the halls and passages. Here Lord Camoys instructed us. We were to bow, on entering the room, to the Queen, who would be sitting facing the door; then advance to her, and drop one knee on the cushion provided; she would then touch each shoulder with the sword; we were then to hold out our right arm lengthwise, and the Queen would put her hand on it to be kissed; she would then say, "Rise, Sir —," and we were to move backwards out of the room.

We were arranged in single file in alphabetical order in the ante-room. As we were forming, I noticed the Duchess of York and two of the Princess of Wales's daughters going slowly up the long broad staircase; they stopped just at the bend, and looked down on us, laughing to each other and pulling each other's sleeve. I am not surprised, for we must have looked very comical. As the door into the Queen's apartment opened to admit each knight and to let him out, I could see the Queen and sometimes hear her voice. This was of course increasingly the case as the line shortened and my turn got nearer. I distinctly saw Mr. — turn his back on the

Queen and come out facing us, and just before that I heard the Queen say something to him. I asked him what it was. "Oh," he said, "I put out my arm before I had been touched, and she told me not to be in such a hurry."

Dr. Richardson was immediately before me and, as I have said, walked with a stick. Directly the Queen, who must know him by reputation, saw this, she exclaimed in a quick voice: "Don't kneel, Dr. Richardson, don't kneel!" "Oh yes, Madam, thank you, I can do so," said the gallant old doctor, but a hint was quietly given to him by the lord-in-waiting, and he refrained. As a matter of fact it was a great relief to him to be knighted standing.

Then my turn came. My name was called out, and I advanced and bowed. I was not in the least degree nervous, and looked for a moment at the Queen. She smiled in quite a friendly way, a real smile, half amusement, half good-nature. I did not glance at her again. I knelt on my right knee and then saw the sword in the air, the blade downwards. She touched me first on the left shoulder, then lifted it over my head and touched the right shoulder. I then put out my arm. Her hand is a little round puffed ball, very red. This must, I think, be due to rheumatism or gout. I kissed it, though my moustache was in the way. I then got up and walked backwards to the door. The room was small, and two steps were enough. The Princess Beatrice stood behind the Queen's chair, but I could see her while the ceremony was going on.

Breathing more freely and comparing notes, we strolled, without hats, the weather being so warm, into the grounds. These somewhat disappointed me, for they are poor and cheap in comparison with those of Windsor, with which I am very well acquainted. The chief feature was the great beds of geraniums and calceolarias. The blaze of the former was almost painful. The fountains have nothing very remarkable about them. Altogether the place is agreeable enough, but Windsor is apt to spoil one.

The servants are fine-looking men, tall and well drilled. They waited to perfection, and anticipated one's wants. Nearly every one of them wore a medal, but I could not see of what kind, and I really had not the courage to ask one of them to let me look.

A thrilling event occurred on our return while we were on the deck of the *Fire Queen*. The beau-captain, our salt Brummell, was positively excited, for *him*. He pointed to a yacht in the long distance. "There, there!" he exclaimed, "that is the *Prince of Wales*. You see, he flies three flags; those are the three victories he has won at Cowes." He looked almost fearfully at the speck in the distance. It was the tooth of his Buddha.

I was greatly sorry that the Queen said nothing to Tenniel. We had talked about it beforehand, and though the dear old fellow deprecated the idea, I fancy he would not have been surprised had it happened. We even, as I had mooted the question, arranged as to how he should address her in his reply. I think the Queen might have done this, especially as I was credibly informed that she makes it her business to find out all about those on whom she confers distinctions. She does not see a Tenniel every day at her Court. In any other country the Sovereign would have been glad of the opportunity of welcoming one who has afforded so much pleasure to his contemporaries. "Did she say anything?" I eagerly asked him as he came out. "No," he said, shaking his head, "she didn't say a word."

But I forgot: before getting into our carriages on the return journey, we all went into a room and signed our names in a huge birthday album. You sign your name under the day of the month on which you were born. Well, there's a masterpiece *now* in that album, under date of November 2nd.

How we did "Sir" each other on our journey home, to be sure! It was almost enough to make a cat laugh. "Well, Sir George," "And what did you think, Sir William?" "Sir John, did you observe?" and so on. There was a check sometimes, it is true, when we didn't know a man's

Christian name. Under these circumstances we generally ventured on "Sir John," which was tolerably safe.

One of the new knights, in the ecstasy of the moment, made a collection for the crew of the vessel. "I have the captain's permission," he said. We had each to pay five shillings. Another proposed that all the seventeen of us should be photographed separately, and exchange likenesses with each other, thus securing a delightful record of this memorable day. "I don't want to give him my photograph," said one distinguished man among us. "But it is worse," I said, "he wants us to have *his*."

Some of the pictures at Osborne are very trying. The portraits of the Queen and the Prince Consort, after Winterhalter, are simple daubs. Anything so *tea-trayey*, so maudlin, so inexpressive, I have scarcely ever seen, save perhaps in a marine store dealer's shop. The large pictures by Landseer, representing poor stags in agonies, are most painful, and I cannot understand how people of ordinary feeling can bear to see them on the walls.

The fees demanded of each of the new knights did not come to the alarming sum mentioned in the above account. As a matter of fact they amounted to £26 : 8 : 2. The incident in which Dr. Richardson figured affords an instructive little hint to those who do not happen to be versed in the matter of Court etiquette. It is related of Louis XIV., in whose view probably ceremonial was the noblest study of man, that he once, by way of testing Marshal Stair's breeding, offered him the *pas* in getting into the royal carriage. The old courtier instantly did as he was bidden, and got in first. "A vulgar man would have pestered me with hesitations and excuses," said the august monarch. The august monarch should rather have said a man who did not happen to be well versed in Court etiquette.

As for the remark about the masterpiece in the Court album, it is a jocular allusion, as might be guessed, to the writer's vile signature, which, except by people who knew it, was sometimes taken to be "Nevinson," at others "Norrison"; rarely for what it was intended to represent.

One thing especially that pleased Robinson with regard to the knighthood was the fun he got out of it. What a delightful little touch that is about the new knights who will keep saying "Sir John" or "Sir William," in order that they may be "Sir John'd" or "Sir William'd" in return! No one could have borne a title with more modesty than he, and he laughed in his sleeve when he saw how certain people, who rather slighted the plain "Mr.," were quite cordial to the "Sir." "What a world it is!" he notes about a month after the ceremony at Osborne. "I was sitting on a chair in the Park to-day near a rather pretty woman. She disregarded me and gave me neither smile nor glance. Presently Mr. Biron, Q.C., and his wife came by. 'How d'ye do, Sir John?' said Biron. The fair one instantly gave me the sweetest look and kept it up until I rose and pursued my walk."

## CHAPTER XXX

Decline of the penny newspapers—Mr. Labouchere's withdrawal from the *Daily News*—A revolution in Bouverie Street—Counter revolution—The manager retires—Testimonials—Journalists and their peculiarities.

It has been seen that the *Daily News*, from a comparatively obscure and struggling paper, had been converted by a master mind into a power in the land and a splendid commercial property. So well recognised was it in Fleet Street that this had been in the main Robinson's achievement, that he had offers in 1872 from the *Daily Telegraph* (then a Liberal organ) and the *Standard*, both of which papers were anxious to secure his services. The proposals came to nothing, however, as he was of opinion that he was freer from control where he was, at the *Daily News*, than he would be almost anywhere else. The heyday of the prosperity of the *Daily News* was in the 'seventies and 'eighties. Things went very well then in Bouverie Street. As the late Colonel North said to a meeting of shareholders who passed a vote of thanks to him : " Oh, of course, I know I am always sure of this compliment as long as the Company pays you twenty per cent." The pinch came, as was sure to be the case, when adversity began to loom in the distance. A wave of Conservatism swept over the country, and London was submerged in it.

The politics of the *Daily News* did not meet with the approval of the majority of newspaper readers. Already in 1886 an attempt had been made to infuse life into the leading articles, which, under Mr. Frank Hill's régime, were deemed to be rather too coldly critical. Accordingly that accomplished journalist gave way to Mr. H. W. Lucy, whose sketches of men and things in Parliament were attracting attention. But Mr. Lucy found criticism less congenial to his taste than picturesque description, and within six months he was back in his little box in the Reporters' Gallery of the House of Commons. The proprietors now determined to appoint no political editor, but to leave absolute control of the policy of the paper to their manager, with Mr. P. W. Clayden as chief of the staff of leading-article writers. An able writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, in an article headed "The New Liberal Leader," thus commented upon the news :—

The announcement that the editorship of the *Daily News* has once more changed hands is more important than the fate of a dozen bye-elections. But the event is passed over entirely unnoticed by the London Press. . . . An able and brilliant critic, he (Mr. Frank H. Hill) was never a journalist, and as for his attempting to fill the rôle to which the editor of the *Daily News* is naturally called, that of the leader and inspirer of the party of liberty and progress, he would as soon have thought to drive the chariot of the sun. His successor, Mr. Lucy, was an even lighter weight. He wields a facile pen, he is inimitable as Toby, M.P. But to place him in charge of the organ of the party of the stalwart Ironsides of Radicalism was one of those cynical jests by which that incorrigible joker Mr. Labouchere sometimes enlivens the monotony of existence. . . . Mr. Gladstone spoke yesterday of "the



thunder of the Metropolitan Press." If the fight is to be maintained on even terms, that thunder should not be entirely on one side. . . . Never was there more urgent need for strong, decided leading, never was there a time when a brave, clear voice ringing like a clarion every morning across the field was more needed to put fresh heart into our divided ranks. Are we to find that in the *Daily News*? It is for Mr. Robinson to reply.

In reality the change thus commented upon was less portentous than the writer of this article supposed. The new arrangement merely recognised what was already practically an established fact. For many years Robinson had been a good deal more than a business manager. It was he who instructed correspondents in the field; who made all the appointments; who gave their instructions to the sub-editors. He acted in fact as the proprietor acts when a paper belongs to an individual. The proprietors of the *Daily News*, a small syndicate which never exceeded ten men, were a mixed body hardly any two of whom had anything in common. The supreme control in the ultimate resort rested with three of them, Mr. Henry Oppenheim, the well-known financier, with politics of no very decided kind; Mr. Arnold Morley, a Right Honourable, an ex-Party whip, and a typical Ministerial Liberal; and Mr. Labouchere, the Radical free-lance. Others had but a small holding, and practically did not count save as regards any moral influence they might bring to bear on their colleagues at Board meetings.

Now just as a council of war never fights, a body such as this can practically do nothing save in the way of delegating their authority, and this, as long as all was well, is what they did. Then

came a period of unrest. It was no secret in Fleet Street that the circulation of the penny papers dropped not all at once in any sensational way, but gradually, persistently.<sup>1</sup> Halfpenny papers sprang up and found favour with the public, to the great majority of whom, however the matter may strike rich, comfortable people, a saving of threepence a week is an important consideration. And the advertisement revenue decreased. The "boom" in City companies was gone; investors had learned to distrust the promises of whole-page displayed advertisements which brought such huge sums into the coffers of the leading newspapers. Pictorial advertisements in large type, which the *Daily News* had been the first to give, were given by most of their rivals. Moreover there were a multiplicity of popular magazines and trade papers that competed for the patronage of advertisers, who, after all, can only spend a certain sum in calling attention to the merits of their wares.

Still, things would not have been so bad had it not been that a serious disagreement occurred that led to Mr. Labouchere's withdrawal from the concern. As the circumstances have been set forth in that gentleman's paper *Truth*, there can be no harm in referring to them here, especially as Mr. Labouchere, writing years after the events now to be narrated, was mistaken in some respects in his recollection of what occurred. "On Mr. Gladstone's withdrawal from public life," he said, "the party, or rather a majority of the officialdom of the party, became tainted with Birmingham Imperialism. My convictions did not allow me

<sup>1</sup> All this has no reference of course to the *Daily News* of the present day. Its price has been reduced to a halfpenny, and other changes have been made, so drastic, that it is practically a new paper under the old name.

to be connected with a newspaper which supported a clique of intriguers that had captured the Liberal ship, and that accepted blindly these intriguers as the representatives of Liberalism in regard to our foreign policy." Now what really happened was this. Mr. Labouchere's disagreements with his partners began not when Mr. Gladstone retired, but when he formed his Government in 1892, and Mr. Labouchere was excluded from office. Mr. Labouchere's view at that time was that Mr. Gladstone's day was over, and that he should be banished to the House of Lords, Home Rule being left to take its chance with other things ; and as he could not control the policy of the *Daily News* in that sense, he gave notice that he would sell his shares.

By the deed of partnership, as Mr. Labouchere has explained, it was provided that any shareholder who wished to dispose of his shares must first offer them to his fellow-shareholders at a certain valuation which was made from time to time. Should they be unwilling to purchase, he could dispose of them in the open market. For more reasons than one the other proprietors did not wish strangers to come in, and they agreed to purchase the shares jointly at their then supposed value. A few were afterwards disposed to Lord Ashton and Lord Brassey, but the majority merely went into the common stock. A serious blunder had been made by which a fresh burden was added to those which the paper already had to bear. For a long time "depression" and "bad trade" were thought to be the root of the evils that existed, and everybody concerned hoped for better times. But at last Mr. Oppenheim and Mr. Morley, who now ruled the

paper, came to the conclusion that a complete change in its foreign policy was necessary if it was to regain its old popularity.

One Sunday, towards the end of 1895, the *Observer* came out with the announcement that Mr. E. T. Cook had been appointed editor of the *Daily News*. It was a revolution. The *Daily News* had been attacking the Government of the day on the subject of our South African policy. Mr. Cook was one of the most distinguished of their supporters. At first the announcement was discredited in Bouverie Street, and no confirmation could be got, but it turned out to be true. The blow to Robinson was a severe one. He was not a strong party politician in the ordinary way, and he interfered little with the policy of the paper save in the sense of seeing that it gave a general, if independent, support to the Liberal party, and that it did not run counter to his cherished ideas of good government and freedom at home and abroad. In his early days, as has been seen, he had had his political enthusiasms—as what young man who is worth anything has not?—and he even for a time, a very brief time, sympathised with the Chartists until the futile gasconades of Feargus O'Connor and other demagogues disgusted him with their cause.

He had been greatly disillusioned, and had come to have a constitutional aversion to panaceas of all sorts. There was much in ordinary party warfare with which he had no sympathy, and that was one of the reasons why he declined to stand for East Marylebone as the Liberal candidate when invited to do so in 1891. Political intrigues disgusted him. “It is always : ‘How will this affect

the party ?' 'What will voters think ?' " he used to say ; " never : 'What is just ?' 'What is right ?' " For Home Rule he had no great affection. He thought that the case did not require so desperate a remedy ; that it was within the power of a wise statesmanship to make Ireland loyal and contented by other means. At the same time he had an intense faith in Mr. Gladstone, and he had seen too many political prophecies falsified in his time to be frightened by the bugbears of the Tory press about disunion and the mutilation of the flag. He had no uneasiness therefore about his connection with a paper that advocated Home Rule.

The case of our relations with the Boers was different. The son of an Independent minister, his heart was with the orthodox dissenters to his dying day, and to him the Dutchmen of the Transvaal, who went into battle singing hymns, were as the Ironsides who smote the Royalists hip and thigh on many a bloody battlefield in the Civil War in the cause of liberty. When therefore the appointment of the new editor was confirmed, and it was intimated to him that henceforth the policy of the paper was to be taken out of his hands, he was sorely tempted to resign the post of manager. From a worldly point of view he was no loser by the proposed change. On the contrary he was in a sense a gainer, for, while pecuniary considerations did not enter into the matter, he was relieved of one portion at least of his responsibilities. He wished to resign. His friends dissuaded him from doing so. They knew him perhaps better than he knew himself. The *Daily News* to him was as a favourite child, his daily visit to the office in Bouverie Street was part of his very existence.

In short he acquiesced, though grudgingly, in the new order of things.

Some years afterwards, when at last his connection with Bouverie Street had ceased, he said: "The greatest mistake of my life was remaining at the *Daily News* after Mr. Cook was appointed Editor." To Mr. Cook personally he had not—could not have—any objection. He always admired that gentleman's journalistic talents, his wonderful grasp of public affairs, his unwearying industry, and in time he came to esteem him highly as one of the most amiable and loyal of colleagues. But agree with him on some matters of foreign policy he could not.

The revolution had taken place. Lord Salisbury's policy, in South Africa at least—and South Africa was then the touchstone of our politics—had no abler defender than the paper that was one of the chief organs of the Liberal party in the country. But that revolution did not effect the result that had been expected of it. It has indeed been asserted in some quarters that it proved the reverse of beneficial as regards the fortunes of the *Daily News*. Those who knew the facts saw no evidence of this. The change of policy simply failed to arrest the downward progress that had set in in connection with the *Daily News* as with other penny papers, especially those which, from the ordinary Londoner's point of view, were on the wrong side in politics. At length Mr. Morley and Mr. Oppenheim, whose liability under the partnership was unlimited, announced that they would endeavour to dispose of the paper.

After a time another and a larger syndicate, conspicuous among whom were Mr. George

Cadbury, Mr. J. P. Thomasson, Mr. Rudolph Lehmann, and Mr. Lloyd George, came in, having acquired the property, and once more there was a great upheaval. Mr. Cook the Imperialist was replaced by Mr. Lehmann the Anti-Imperialist, and the *Daily News*, which had been assuring its readers that all was well in South Africa, was now declaring that pandemonium was the proper name of the state of things out there. Robinson, although thoroughly in sympathy with Mr. Lehmann, who was a highly esteemed friend of his, determined at last to resign. The time was out of joint, and at his age, seventy-two, it was too great a task for him to attempt to set it right. When his decision was made known, the new proprietors very kindly and generously offered him a substantial salary if he would act merely as a sort of consulting director whose advice could be sought in any difficulty that might arise. This offer, however, he did not consider himself justified in accepting. He had earned for himself something more than a mere competency ; he had done his share in the work of the world, and henceforth he would live at peace, dividing his time between his home and his favourite club.

No formal leave-taking from his colleagues took place at the moment. He did not feel equal to it. To one who saw him on the last day put on his hat and coat preparatory to leaving, "Please do not speak to me," he said, and his wish was respected. The following day was one of gloom in Bouverie Street. All was dark there, for it was the day of the funeral of Queen Victoria, and the blinds were down. There was mourning also for the chief who had departed, for the humblest

employé knew that he had lost a friend. The Right Honourable John Morley wrote :—

Forgive a word of greeting (in more senses than one) on your leaving the position where you have played so good and honourable a part. Though you and I have never actually served together in the same ship, I have always had a comrade's feeling for you, and I believe there have been few occasions in the affairs of the last thirty years when you and I have not thought and felt alike. I am sure you will have some pain at leaving the familiar post, but you will be consoled, or ought to be, by knowing that you carry with you the respect and honour of everybody who cares for the best traditions of English journalism. I wish you all good fortune and content for the space of the journey that still remains.

Scores of such letters might be cited, but that one alone suffices. Coming as it did from one who has done so much to set a high standard in public life, it gave intense gratification to him to whom it was addressed. As on the occasion of his being knighted, Robinson's career formed the subject of articles in nearly all the newspapers, and one and all, Liberal and Conservative alike, spoke of him in friendly and respectful terms.

As a mark of their appreciation of his long services, the old proprietors gave him a handsome service of plate. The presentation took place at a dinner at Mr. Henry Oppenheim's residence in Bruton Street. The gathering included such men as Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, Sir William Harcourt, Lord Spencer, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Brassey, Lord Burghclere, Lord Carrington, Lord Cork, Lord Welby, Sir Evelyn Wood, Sir W. Butler, Sir E. Hamilton, Mr. Arnold Morley, Mr. Charles Morley, Sir Algernon West, Sir Robert



Giffen, Sir George Lewis, Mr. Charles W. Mathews, and some old journalistic colleagues and friends. The dinner, at which the guest of the evening sat between the host and Sir Evelyn Wood, passed off very successfully. Toby, M.P., was present, and this is his description of it in *Punch* :—

Dinner given in honour of John Robinson, Knight, who made the *Daily News*, and revolutionised British journalism by establishing the practice of using the telegraph instead of the pen for word-pictures from the battlefield. C.-B. heard much of late designed to make dinners distasteful; found this an exception. A notable gathering to do honour to the Master Journalist. In addition to colleagues, some of whom worked with him on the old paper for a quarter of a century, there were the Squire of Malwood, who has intimate acquaintance with the contributor to the morning newspaper wont to sign himself "Historicus"; the Red Earl, now, alack, growing grey; Lord Aberdeen, Lord Brassey, the ever-buoyant Lord Cork, the mute but not inglorious Lord Welby; Earl Carrington, faithful among the faithless found; a former private secretary of Mr. G.'s; an old Liberal Whip, and others known only to fame.

To leave this cheerful circle and suddenly fall into cauldron of Parliamentary wrangle painful experience. C.-B., as usual, made the best of it.

"The fact is, dear boy," he said, mopping his massive brow, "the new century has invested dinners with a novel danger. If there isn't a row at the table, you are sure to come in for one immediately after."

Some time afterwards there was another testimonial, which perhaps gave him even more pleasure than the first. It was from his old colleagues of the *Daily News*—a service of plate for himself and a bracelet for his daughter. Mr. H. W. Paul presided at the dinner at the National

Liberal Club at which it was given, and there was a full muster. Mr. Paul, who made his mark when in the House of Commons, spoke in dignified and eloquent terms of his old chief, who acknowledged the compliment paid to him in a speech that was half-playful, half pathetic. In it there was nothing more characteristic than the following passage :—

The managerial career can never be all sweet-cake and champagne. A manager does not sit still and listen to "the natural music of the earth." In his business he has to deal with perhaps the most sensitive folk on the globe. The artistic temperament is always allowed to be "difficult," which in plain English means that it is often allied to a devilish quick temper. I have been told that there are no two humming-birds exactly alike : I'm sure no two journalists are. I take it that we in this room are the only ones *absolutely* free from jealousy or vanity or irritability. There have been great lights in our sky whose splendour still lingers, who at certain moments have been to me—well, rather a handful ; but I like to think that no separation that I can remember, has ever taken place on that score. If I have succeeded in any degree in this, it is because I have always really sympathised with my fellow-men ; I have tried to look at things from their point of view as well as from my own, and it is wonderful what misunderstandings are cleared away if that is the rule. "Put yourself in his place"—often and often has this seemed to come as a whisper in my ear in the presence of carelessness or neglect or even downright misconduct.

All who were present, and who knew the speaker, knew also that there spoke the man.

## CHAPTER XXXI

In retirement—Failing health—Illness and death—Funeral—An eloquent tribute—Sir John Robinson : a personal appreciation.

AT the time of his retirement from Bouverie Street in February 1901, the veteran manager was still to all appearance a hale and hearty man. He was active enough to enjoy a four or five mile walk, and would not infrequently wend his way on foot through the parks from his house in Kensington to his club in Pall Mall. In his speech at the Newspaper Press dinner in 1897, he had prophesied that if ever he threw off his journalistic responsibilities he would feel as though he already had "one foot in old Charon's boat." Whether this was the thought that was uppermost in his mind when the crisis came, it is impossible to say. It is quite certain, however, that before very long he became reconciled to his new mode of life, and felt even thankful for the repose that had come after so many strenuous years. He was one of those men who do not age mentally, and his interest in life in its different phases continued unabated. A new play, a new oratorio, the military tournament, a horticultural show, always had attractions for him. In whatsoever men do, there was nothing to which he was indifferent, and therein

he was happier than many, perhaps most, men who retire after an active life.

Respected by all and beloved by his intimate friends, existence flowed on peacefully and happily for the greater part of the space that remained to him. It was not until the beginning of 1903 that the state of his health gave rise to apprehension. A certain difficulty which he experienced in getting upstairs seemed to point to heart mischief of some kind. Then after a time the least exertion would cause him to pant for breath, and his family were in constant fear that he might fall down and be run over in the street. Early in August he had news of the death of his eldest brother, Mr. Joseph Fletcher Robinson, who had made a fortune as a drug broker in Liverpool, and had lived in retirement for many years in Devonshire. It was a great shock to him, and the journey to Ipslepen for the funeral proved very fatiguing and distressing.

It is a strange coincidence that the very day before Sir John Robinson's fatal seizure, he had met Mr. Arnold Morley and Mr. Henry Oppenheim by appointment at the house of the former in Stratton Street, to assist at a final settlement of certain outstanding matters in connection with the old *Daily News* partnership. This was on Saturday, November 21. The following day was the last on which he went out. He dined at the Reform Club, and soon after his return home he had a fainting fit. He rallied, but was never himself again. His medical attendant and personal friend, Dr. George Hastings, saw him on the Monday and at very frequent intervals afterwards. Everything that loving care could do was done, but in vain.

His son and daughter divided the duty of sitting up through the night with him, and Dr. Hadley, of the London Hospital, was called in consultation.

The report of the medical men was not favourable. The patient could not lie down, and he gasped for breath, so that oxygen had to be administered. On the morning of Monday, November 30, the following bulletin was shown to the many callers at Addison Crescent: "Sir John Robinson is suffering from cardiac failure and congestion of the lungs.—G. Hastings, M.D." It was evident that there was little or no hope. Death came on the afternoon of the same day at about five o'clock. There was no struggle, no apparent pain; simply a silent ebbing away of consciousness. On the previous day, Sunday, his old friend Sir John Macdonell called, and the patient was just able to say: "Good fellow; written a life of me." This was understood to have reference to the biographical sketch which afterwards appeared in the *Times*, and which certainly revealed personal knowledge. It was very sympathetic in character, as indeed were all the notices in the newspapers. Journalists felt that they had lost one who conferred honour on their craft.

The funeral service took place on the following Saturday at Essex Church, the Mall, Notting Hill Gate. It was a depressing day in more senses than one to those who attended. A dense fog enveloped London so completely that it was dangerous to cross the roads. More than one of the old colleagues who set out to pay the last homage to their old chief had perforce to turn back. For all that there was a fairly representative

gathering. Those who had been associated with him on the *Daily News* included Sir Robert Giffen, Sir John Macdonell, Mr. Richard Whiteing, Mr. E. T. Cook, Mr. Corrie Grant, M.P., Mr. J. C. Parkinson, Mr. H. H. S. Pearse, Mr. G. F. Millin, Mr. Alexander Paul, Mr. W. Moy Thomas, Mr. E. A. Peachey, Mr. W. Roberts, Mr. H. Neill, Mr. Claude Hamilton, Mr. T. Coates, Mr. A. Janes, Mr. L. Hawes, Mr. W. B. Hodgson, Mr. H. Murch, and the writer of these lines. The Reform Club was represented by Sir Robert Hunter, Mr. H. Chatfeild Clarke, Mr. Rupert Potter, and Mr. Charles Vincent, the librarian, with whom Sir John Robinson was associated as a member of the Library Committee. Other friends were Mr. Charles W. Mathews and Mrs. Mathews, Mr. F. Clifford, K.C., one of the last surviving members of the Council of the ill-fated Guild of Literature and Art, Mr. T. S. Osler, Mr. Charles Morley, M.P., Dr. George Hastings, Mr. Thornton Sharp, Secretary of the Newspaper Press Fund, Mr. Talbot Baines, the Rev. R. Hadden, Mr. Mackenzie Bell, and the Rev. V. D. Davis. The chief mourners were Sir John's son, Mr. Oswald R. Robinson; his daughter, Miss Robinson; his brother, Mr. F. Robinson, J.P., of Stowmarket, with Mrs. Robinson; his sister, Mrs. Scott, of Windsor, and Mr. Scott. There were also several nephews.

The coffin, upholstered in violet cloth and surmounted by a floral tribute sent by old colleagues "In affectionate remembrance," was borne into the church as the solemn tones of Beethoven's "Funeral March" came swelling forth from the organ. The service was conducted by the Rev. Frank K.

Freeston, who had served with Sir John as a Trustee of Dr. Williams's Library.

"We have gathered together in this church," said the minister, "men of many callings and drawn from many parts, to pay our common regard to the memory of the dead. We have come to bid adieu to one who was not alone honoured, but beloved when living; one whose ideals touched to finer issues his generation and his nation, and one whose works will assuredly follow him. Laborious years of faithful service had more than earned his retirement and rest, and he himself would have been the last to wish that we should mourn his decease with too much sadness, or indulge in conventional terms of praise. May both, then, be absent from this service. But yet, however many tributes of esteem may be paid to a good man in his lifetime, and he had many, there are some things that can only be said when the silence of death prevents all reply. And it is just because he, with such unaffected modesty, made no claim for notoriety and deplored the modern hunger for publicity that we feel the more impelled to recall to-day his many and real claims upon our memory.

"He never belied his early training. A son of the pulpit, he inherited through three generations of Non-conformist ministers a fine and unbroken tradition of civil and religious freedom which, in a different but kindred profession, he nobly upheld and maintained to the end. When the last Poet Laureate sang his ode of 'The Golden Year' to which all look forward, the time when each man's rule shall be all men's good, he placed side by side as twin means of advance the mission of the Cross and the mission of the Press. It is not too much to claim, it were less than justice not to claim, that Sir John Robinson from the very beginning regarded and honoured his journalistic calling with the high meaning of a mission, and in a special sense made his *Daily News* a strong force for righteousness."

The preacher then spoke of Sir John's fearless

and righteous advocacy of the cause of oppressed nationalities, to the struggle for Italian freedom, the war for the liberation of the slaves in America, the French Peasant Relief Fund, and the exposure of Turkish misrule, and continuing said :—

Of his private life we may not speak too intimately, but the impressions which he made on those who met him frequently, in his office, or committee, at his club, in the theatre or elsewhere, form a most happy picture of his ever kindly and sunny nature. Gentle, gracious, generous, humorous, full of good stories and knowing how to tell them, fond of young children, loyal to old servants, uniformly considerate to his staff, emotionally affectionate to those who had once won his heart, holding no kindly office for his friends too troublesome or difficult, he must indeed have revealed to others and enjoyed himself—

That best portion of a good man's life,—  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of kindness and of love.

It was his own expressed wish that his funeral service should be held in this church, and in keeping it quite simple and informal we are doing, I think, that which he would have desired.

Having referred to Sir John's connection with the Unitarian body, the preacher concluded :—

If ever death can lose its bitterness, surely it is when it thus comes to an honoured and mellowed old age, when life has nobly done its work and fulfilled its promise, and when rest comes as a sleep from which shall dawn a wondrous awakening. We thank God for all good men, and we pray that we may have grace to follow them.

After the service the remains, according to the wish of the deceased, were conveyed to Golder's Hill, where they were cremated, and later in the



day the ashes were deposited in the family grave at Highgate Cemetery.

There was not a man who listened to the touching address in Essex Church on that solemn occasion who did not recognise the truth of the portrait drawn by the preacher. Something further, however, may here be said on the subject, in order that any who may be interested in Sir John Robinson's career, and who did not have the advantage of his acquaintance, may have a clearer notion of the sort of man he was. In figure he was neither tall nor short, his height being five feet seven or five feet eight inches. His hair was red, or of a reddish brown, and to the end of his life still retained some traces of that colour. He always wore, for thirty or more years, a full beard and heavy, drooping moustache. He was fairly thick-set and muscular. At one time he was becoming stout, but, such was his resolution, that for six months he lived chiefly upon lean meat, dry toast, and tea without milk or sugar, and at the end of that time he had shrunk to such an extent that he had to give away all his clothing, which was much too large for him. After that he never had any tendency to obesity.

Without his glasses he could not recognise any one in the street, for he was near-sighted, but he could read with ease with the naked eye the most microscopic print. To those who met him for the first time he had an air of modest diffidence, almost shyness, which, however, soon wore off. He was essentially a well-informed man, for he was an omnivorous reader and he had known many people; yet he was never self-assertive, and always listened courteously, even when persons presumed to instruct

him on matters with which he was far better acquainted than they. Regularly once a year he read through all Sir Walter Scott's and all Miss Austen's novels. They were his prime favourites. Thomas Love Peacock also he greatly admired, and Mrs. Oliphant, and of course Dickens and Thackeray and George Eliot. His range of reading was very wide, from the Higher Criticism to the latest new novel, which, however, he would not read unless he could discover that it had a happy ending. He was always well abreast too of modern French literature, and for many years never failed to read the *Revue des deux Mondes*, and the latest works of leading writers.

He was essentially a humane man. Cruelty, injustice, were the only things that could rouse his anger. The sufferings of the lower animals would move him profoundly. The remark about Landseer's pictures, in his description of his visit to Osborne House, is eminently characteristic. He could not understand how any one could like to contemplate the sufferings of stags, even as depicted on canvas. Here is another trait of the same description from a note in one of his diaries, in which he describes a walk over the Downs from Brighton to Lewes in company with his friend Mr. Edwin A. Ward, the clever portrait-painter, early in March 1890 :—

The wind blew like a hurricane, and was directly in our teeth. The grass was covered with flakes of ice, and repeatedly we had to wade through drifts of snow over our knees. Clouds of powdered snow swept over us. We could not hear each other speak. I confess that once or twice I nearly gave in. At last Lewes appeared afar off, and I started at a run. After we reached the high-road,

the birds came flying about us. I fear they were starving. One little robin kept up with us for half a mile. I would have given a sovereign for a biscuit to break up for him. As it was, we had not a crumb.

Sir John Robinson was generous to a fault, for he was often victimised by designing hangers-on to the Press, who knew him by sight, and would stop him in Fleet Street to pour some piteous tale in his ear. To young men, even though they might be perfect strangers, he was especially kind and considerate. A writer in the *Rochdale Observer* some years ago told how he had seen a long letter of Sir John Robinson's to a young and unknown journalist in the provinces, explaining the difficulty of getting an opening on the London Press, and full of good practical advice. He never forgot the old days when he had himself felt grateful for just such a friendly letter. In all his relations he was ever courtesy itself. It is significant that although no one could have been less in sympathy with Cardinal Newman, he quotes with marked approval in a commonplace book the Cardinal's definition of a gentleman from the *Idea of a University* :—

It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain. . . . The true gentleman carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast ; all clashing of opinion or collision of feeling, all restraint or suspicion or gloom or resentment ; his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home. . . . From a long-sighted prudence, he observes the maxim of an ancient sage—that we should ever conduct ourselves toward our enemy as if he were one day to be our friend. He has too much good sense to be affronted at insults, he is too well employed to remember injuries, and too indolent to

bear malice. He is patient, forbearing, and resigned on philosophical principles ; he submits to pain because it is inevitable, and to death because it is his destiny.

How nearly Sir John Robinson acted up to the ideal here set forth will be readily admitted by all who really knew him. No man was more constant in his friendships, and no man ever had more devoted friends. The books that were dedicated to him make a small library, and he is introduced into at least two novels under a transparent disguise : as "Rorison" in Mr. J. M. Barrie's *When a Man's Single*, and as "Mr. Witham" in Mr. Fraser Rae's *An American Duchess*. Like Dr. Johnson, he loved London, but it is quite a mistake to suppose, as a former colleague of his has suggested, that he was ignorant of matters relating to the country. In a little pamphlet entitled *The Uppermost Thoughts of Well Known Essex Men*, published by the proprietors of the *Chelmsford Chronicle* a few years ago, the following is given as from Sir J. R. Robinson :—

Greetings to all of Essex born. Wander as he may, wrestle as he please with the crowd, the Essex man can never stand where the musings of his youth are lost ; where pictures will not arise in sweet succession of the slowly-moving river, the green lane, the nest in the tree, the homestead, the harvest groups, the scarlet huntsman. Should he return, countless things, dead till then, spring up. What does the city-born know of this sweet melancholy ? Can he find the house where he first drew breath ? We will cling to our dear old county, and in the great field of the world look to it as our favourite corner.

Is that little word-picture, it may be asked, from the pen of a typical Cockney who knows nothing of rural sights and sounds ? No, the Essex man loved the town, but he also loved the

country. It is true that he rarely took a holiday. When a young man he found time for a scamper through France, Switzerland, the Rhine provinces, and Belgium, but he seldom went so far afield. Travelling was distasteful to him, and he delighted in satirising his own weakness in this respect by speaking of a contemplated week's trip to Folkestone or Brighton as though it would entitle him to admission to the 'Travellers' Club. Above all, he loved the society of his friends and was unhappy if long away from London. He might perhaps have ventured on a visit to America, to which he was often invited, and where he would have been entertained with splendid hospitality. But he was constitutionally incapable of sleeping on board a vessel from the sense of confinement produced by the cabin.

As a mimic, Sir John Robinson had remarkable powers. There were few persons whom he could not hit off in this way, both as regards the voice and little mannerisms that would have escaped a less observant eye. His imitations of Lord Palmerston and Lord Lytton were as dissimilar as possible, and both were marked by a strong personality. By some who had heard those statesmen they were declared to be perfect. With his strong perception of the incongruous he was a humorist rather than a wit, but he occasionally said a witty thing. Dining at Sir Francis Jeune's house in March 1892, he met a gentleman whom he did not know at first, but who turned out to be Mr. Ritchie, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer, who just then had had two unfortunate reverses at elections. In the drawing-room, after dinner, Mr. Ritchie, who is a tall and rather heavy man, broke

a chair in sitting on it and fell on the floor. "Who is it?" he asked. "It is Mr. Ritchie," said Lady Stirling, the wife of the Judge. "Then that is the third seat he has lost," Sir John observed.

Again, at the time when the Liberal party was split up on the Home Rule question, he was conversing with a group of friends, and some one mentioned a member of a political club who had been married twice and had twenty children. "Let me see," said some one present, "what are his politics?" "Oh," said he, "Liberal Unionist of course."

It has been said that Sir John Robinson was like Dr. Johnson, inasmuch as he loved London. In one other respect he resembled the famous sage. He was fond of nursing a prejudice in a whimsical sort of way. Just as Johnson pretended to hate the Scots (he no more hated the Scots, by the way, than he disliked Mrs. Boswell because he used to call her his "enemy") Sir John Robinson professed a contempt for the Irish. How this originated is not clear. Perhaps the absurd antics of Feargus O'Connor in the old Chartist days had something to do with it. It was very doubtful whether he really had any dislike of Irishmen, and it is certain that some of them were among his friends, but he was ever ready to pretend that he did. "Do not tell me that my dear Justin M'Carthy is an Irishman," he said laughingly on one occasion; "he has lived all his life in England." To such controversial straits was he driven in order to maintain his playful contention that nothing good came out of Ireland.

One of the secrets of Sir John Robinson's

success lay in the fact that he was never afraid to give praise where it was due. In this way he managed to get what was best out of a man. More than once did Archibald Forbes bear testimony to the fact that it was encouragement of this sort that had done more than anything else to nerve him to great undertakings. "Whenever the old days come back to me," he wrote in 1888, "you are the foremost figure in the memory, for that you ever bepraised me with words that fed my ardour, and were kind, generous, and full of wise counsel." Many others there are who would be ready to echo those words of not the least prominent of the many distinguished men who have been proud to serve under the banner of one of the most accomplished of journalists, kindest of men, best of chiefs.





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